Women in the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Games:

An Analysis of Participation, Leadership, and Media Coverage

A Women's Sports Foundation Research Report, November 2026

Women's Sports Foundation®

Preface and Acknowledgments

Preface

The 2026 study updates the Women's Sports Foundation's *Women in the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Games: An Analysis of Participation, Leadership and Media Coverage* report, a comprehensive study comparing the parity of women's participation and leadership. This report is the 10th in the series.[i] This report about the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Milano Cortina is intended to provide governing bodies, athletes, researchers, academics, and policymakers at the national and international levels with a deeply researched eye toward making the Olympic and Paralympic movements equitable for all, as well as to create a series of accessible talking points regarding gender equity and Milano Cortina 2026. Some of the research questions considered include:

- What progress has been made in athletic opportunities for women?
- What progress has been made in coaching and leadership opportunities for women?
- What progress has been made in representing female athletes in the media?

i The Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) published the first three reports. The Sport, Health and Activity Research and Policy Center for Women and Girls (SHARP), a research center at the University of Michigan's Institute for Research on Women and Gender, co-founded by WSF, published the fourth report. In 2017, WSF published the fifth report, which provided the most comprehensive examination of participation trends among female Olympic and Paralympic athletes, as well as the hiring trends of Olympic and Paralympic governing bodies with respect to the number of women who hold leadership positions in these organizations. WSF has continued with that comprehensive approach and has published all consecutive reports since then. Previous reports can be found at the WSF website.

Acknowledgments

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Thank you to L'Oreal for generously supporting our research.

Methodology

This report assesses the representation of women as athletes and leaders, as well as in media coverage in the Olympic and Paralympic Movements. To determine the number of female and male Olympians and Paralympians, the authors counted the number of female and male athletes by National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and National Paralympic Committees (NPCs), as well as in each sport and discipline. To determine the number of women in leadership positions, the authors primarily relied upon information available on organizational websites. For the media analysis, the authors examined photos posted to the following Instagram accounts' main feeds: @MilanoCortina2026, @Olympics, @Paralympics, @NBCOlympics, and @TeamUSA. For a complete overview of the methodology, see Appendix C.

About the Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation® (WSF®) exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life. We are an ally, an advocate, and a catalyst for tomorrow's leaders. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we are one of the first organizations to recognize the powerful connection between sport access, equity, and society. For 50 years and counting, WSF has been changing the game through its research, advocacy, and community programming, investing over $100 million to help girls and women play, compete, and lead — in sports and beyond — without barriers. A leader and champion of the entire women's sports ecosystem, WSF amplifies the vital societal and cultural impact that is made when girls and women play sports. When girls play, they lead, and we all win!® To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org.

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Part I

In lieu of the Executive Summary that has been a part of previous reports, this opening section of the report will provide both narrative and visual representations of the information, data, and conclusions of the team's research and analysis in a move to present the complex content in a way that is clear and engaging. In Part II, the complete report is available, followed by a series of appendices in Part III that provide additional data in support of the report's central conclusions.

Milano Cortina by the Numbers

- Women constituted 46.9% of athletes at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games, an increase from 45.4% at the Beijing 2022 Games, but still short of achieving full parity.
- The Olympic program included 50 women's events out of 116 medal events, with Nordic combined remaining exclusively male and hockey brackets still uneven, continuing the schedule's structural inequality.
- Milano Cortina marked the fourth consecutive Paralympic Winter Games with record female participation; women accounted for 26.1% of athletes, up from 24.4% in 2022, with several countries — including Italy, Latvia, and South Korea — sending unprecedented numbers of women.
- Structural limits continue to constrain women's participation in the Paralympic Winter Games, with 176 slots for women versus 323 for men (plus gender-neutral spots).
- Women hold 44.3% of IOC membership and 40% of Executive Board positions, with lower representation across International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs). No woman served as a president of a Winter IF.
- Women occupy roughly 20.2% of U.S. winter sport coaching positions, indicating persistent leadership gaps. Male teams also had more coaching resources: U.S. men's hockey listed 24 people as "team staff," while their female counterparts listed 20, and U.S. sled hockey had 10.
- Media coverage shows women were overrepresented in Olympic (55%) and Paralympic coverage (43.7%) compared to their participation numbers in quantity, but inequities in framing continued
- In the United States, viewership of the Paralympic Winter Games doubled from Beijing, with NBC declaring Milano Cortina the most watched on record with 22.7 million viewers.
- American women won 67% (eight of 12) of U.S. gold and 61% of all medals, marking the sixth consecutive Olympic Games (summer and winter) that U.S. women finished with more gold and total medals than men.
- U.S. women's hockey has now won a medal (three gold) in every Games since the event's inception: eight consecutive Olympic Winter Games.

The Top Nine of Milano Cortina

The following points distill the central themes, accomplishments, and priorities outlined throughout this report. Together, they provide a concise snapshot of some of the most significant takeaways shaping the work.

Participation

Gender equality is, and needs to remain, built into the structure of competition, as progress is driven by event design, not just by athlete quotas.

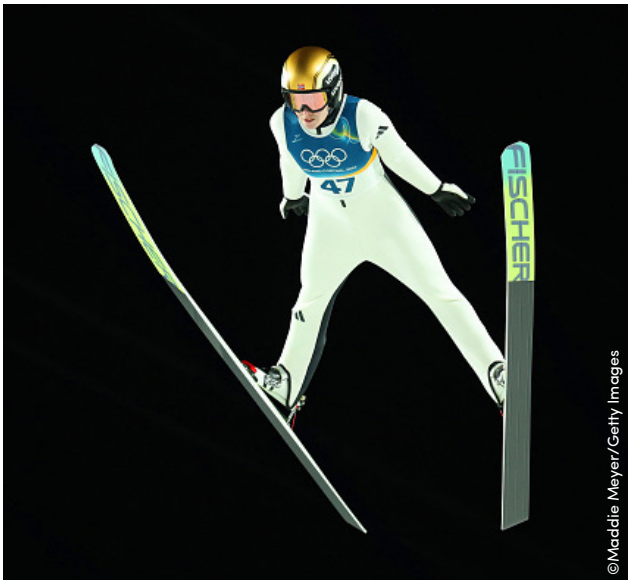
1. **Structural inequities continued to limit full gender parity.**
    - Four sports — bobsleigh, ice hockey, luge, and Nordic combined — accounted for a 174-athlete participation gap favoring men, making 50/50 overall representation mathematically impossible.
    - Nordic combined remained the only winter Olympic sport with no women's competition, underscoring how event design still excluded women from full participation.
    - The imbalance was most visible in ice hockey (300 men across 12 teams vs. 230 women across 10 teams) and bobsleigh (114 men vs. 56 women), where structural differences in roster size and event offerings continued to advantage male athletes.
    - In the Paralympic Winter Games, no sport reached even 40% female participation, revealing inequities far deeper than those seen in the Olympic Winter Games.
    - The starkest example came in mixed para ice hockey, where the field included 133 men and just two women, exposing how "mixed" competition can mask profound gender imbalance.

2. **Several sports demonstrated meaningful structural progress.**

   - For the first time, women and men competed at identical distances in cross-country skiing, a significant correction to one of the Games' longest-standing competitive disparities. Male athletes continue to compete in longer distances in biathlon, short track speed skating, and speed skating.
   - In ski jumping, women competed on the same large hill and in equal numbers (50 women, 50 men) as men — a dramatic shift from the 2014 debut of women's ski jumping, when only 30 women competed compared to 61 men.
   - The Olympic debut of ski mountaineering was built on parity from the outset, with 18 women and 18 men, illustrating how new sports can embed equity through intentional design.

3. **Representation gains remained uneven across delegations and were even more limited in the Paralympic Games.**

   - At the 2026 Olympic Winter Games, the United States had the largest of the 93 delegations, with 232 athletes (115 female athletes and 117 male athletes). Thirty-five NOCs included at least 15 athletes, and those 35 NOCs dominated the medal count. Seventeen NOCs were represented by one solo athlete, 14 of whom were male.
   - Participation expanded globally, with Benin, Guinea-Bissau, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) making their winter Olympic debut; notably, the UAE included one female Alpine skier, a reminder that smaller delegations can still carry significant symbolic importance for women's representation.
   - At the 2026 Paralympic Games, 450 (73.9%) male athletes and 159 (26.1%) female athletes, totaling 616 Paralympians, competed. Fifty-five National Paralympic Committee (NPC) delegations participated, with only 16 NPCs having delegations of 10 or more athletes. Of the remaining 39 NPCs with fewer than 10 athletes, 19 were male-only delegations (12 of these male-only delegations had one male athlete). There were five female-only delegations (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Iceland, Israel, and Liechtenstein), four of which had one female athlete. The Paralympic Winter Games are considerably smaller than the summer Paralympic Games. The United States had the largest delegation of athletes, with 68 Paralympians (20 women and 48 men).



In the first year of the large hill event, Anna Odine Strøm of Team Norway won to become the first woman to capture two individual ski jumping golds at a single Olympic Games.

Leadership

While efforts to advance equitable participation have produced visible gains, particularly within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC), progress remains uneven and incomplete across coaching, international governance, and U.S. leadership structures, highlighting the gap between commitment and meaningful systemic change.

1. **(Continued) Disparity in Coaching**

   - Women continue to be dramatically underrepresented in U.S. coaching, with disparities increasing as roles increase in authority.
   - Olympic Winter Games: Among the U.S. Olympic teams, 83 men served as coaches compared to just 21 women (20.2%), and no woman served as a head coach of a sport or team.[1]
   - Paralympic Winter Games: Of 11 U.S. Paralympic coach positions, men held eight and women held three.

1 Karen Harjo's title is "Head Coach — Mikaela Shiffrin," but she was tabulated as an individual coach. Kristen Bourne is the World Cup coach in cross-country skiing, but because Matt Whitcomb is listed as the "head coach" of the sport, she was tabulated as an assistant. Similarly, Cathy Overton-Clapham, who coaches the women's curling team and mixed-doubles team, was listed in the individual category as there is no head coach of the three curling teams.

2. **Uneven International Progress**

- Although the IOC and IPC have taken visible steps toward gender equity, most notably through the election of the first female IOC President and 50/50 parity of the IPC Governing Board, these advances are uneven and do not extend consistently across other international and national bodies.
- Across International Federations, men continue to maintain authority, holding 73.7% of voting positions on executive boards and all president positions.
- Of the 205 active NOCs, 177 (86.3%) are presided over by men. Men preside over 82.1% of NPCs.

3. **U.S. Leadership Gains and Gaps**

- The U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) has made notable progress in terms of gender equity. Women constitute nearly half (47.4%) of the Governing Board.
- NGBs have not consistently reflected these gender equity gains, resulting in uneven progress and gaps across the U.S. sport structure. Women hold 32% of U.S. NGB board of directors voting positions, with all boards chaired by men.

Media

Media coverage of Milano Cortina reflected meaningful progress and lingering inequities, with increased visibility for women alongside persistent differences in how male and female athletes are portrayed. These patterns highlight not only gaps in representation and framing, but also the potential for more equitable and transformative storytelling in sport media writ large.

1. **Shifts in the Spotlight**

- Olympic Winter Games: Female athletes were pictured 55% of the time on the four Instagram accounts that were examined (@Olympics, @MilanoCortina2026, @NBCOlympics and @TeamUSA), compared to male athletes 45%, which is consistent with the shift in coverage noted in Paris 2024 report
- Paralympic Winter Games: female athletes were pictured 43.7% of the time on Instagram accounts @Paralympics, @MilanoCortina2026, @NBCOlympics and @TeamUSA, compared to male athletes 56.3%, but it was double the participation rate of female athletes, which was 23%.
- Among both Games, metacommunicative posts[2] dominated the types of images; these primarily celebrate the accomplishments of athletes or promote events.

2. **Quality vs. Quantity**

- Olympic Winter Games: Male athletes were more likely to be depicted as active, and female athletes were more likely to be in the metacommunicative category, probably due to the number of medals won by women. In addition, female athletes who participated in individual sports were much more likely to be pictured than male athletes in individual sports.
- Paralympic Winter Games: Female athletes were more likely to be depicted as passive, while male athletes were more likely to be in the celebration category. Otherwise, the coverage was relatively equitable.

3. **Opportunities for Transformation**

- Follow the example provided by the @TeamUSA Instagram account, which demonstrated how to celebrate achievements of male and female athletes while treating them as competent athletes.
- Focus on Paralympians, positioning them as athletes first, such as the social media post by @TeamUSA that included all three hockey teams — men, women, sled — on a gold-medal graphic.
- Move the gold-medal women's hockey game to a time that facilitates more viewership and is equitable to the men's game day and time.



Alysa Liu of Team USA came out of retirement to capture Olympic figure skating gold.

2 For example, a post with Laila Edwards of the women's ice hockey team that boldly says she is the first Black woman to play for the U.S. women's national ice hockey team.

Welcome to Milano Cortina: A Narrative Overview

The 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games represented more than a return to Italy. They offered a critical lens through which to assess the evolving place of women in global sport. Across competition, the Games again provided a uniquely visible stage where questions of access, authority, and representation converged. The IOC and IPC continue to position gender equality[3] as central priorities. Events at Milano Cortina served as critical benchmarks for assessing progress toward these goals, particularly following the near gender parity achieved at the 2022 Olympic Winter Games in Beijing, where women constituted 1,315 out of 2,901athletes.

Such developments are guided by key IOC and IPC frameworks, including the *IOC Gender Equality Review Project* (2018) and *Olympic Agenda 2020+5* (2021), which reaffirm the goal of 50% female participation and expanded gender equity across leadership and representation. The IPC, once a leader in mandating gender parity, revised its governance structure in 2021 to make many gender targets non-binding, raising concerns about enforcement.

This report assesses the extent to which the IOC, IPC, IFs, and NGBs are fulfilling commitments to gender equality and equity. It will highlight meaningful gains alongside persistent gaps, underscoring that while gender parity is increasingly attainable, achieving sustained and systemic equity remains unfinished work. Thus, in the tradition of previous reports, this report approaches Milano Cortina as both a benchmark and a bellwether, examining who competes, who leads, and who is seen, with analysis organized around the three interlocking dimensions of participation, leadership, and media coverage. It demonstrates that women's excellence in sport should not be viewed as a breakthrough, but rather as the result of access, investment, and sound policy. Women will continue to offer competitive and globally representative performances at the Games with continued and improved funding, development pathways, and athlete-centered supports and protections that are driven by equitable funding models, transparency in governance, and expanded leadership opportunities for women at every level.

Participation remains the most visible, and arguably the most measurable and most talked about, marker of progress, with the continued push toward geographic diversity — the Philippines saw its first woman, skier Tallulah Proulx, compete in a Winter Games, and French women competed in ice hockey for the first time — and relative gender parity in athlete quotas reflecting decades of advocacy that have led to institutional commitments by the International Olympic Committee.

The Milano Cortina Games included 2,885 athletes, 1,353 (46.9%) of whom were women — an incremental step toward the IOC's goal of 50% female participation under *Olympic Agenda 2020* and *Olympic Agenda 2020+5* (2021). The program featured 116 medal events, including expanded women's competitions, mixed-gender events in disciplines such as freestyle skiing and snowboarding, and a high-profile team event in figure skating. However, the continued absence of women's Nordic combined highlights enduring structural inequities that prevent equal numbers of men and women.

The number of events for women did expand in Milano Cortina, but the IOC did not add more women, per se, but rather engineered parity through new events. Milano Cortina 2026 saw the addition of eight new events, many designed specifically to expand female participation, such as adding women's ski jumping large hill (the product of an athlete-driven advocacy campaign), women's doubles luge, and dual moguls. Mixed-gender events (12 total) continued to be a major tool for equity, blending participation rather than separating it.

In Milano Cortina, the gender gap was concentrated in a few structural holdouts, driven by a handful of sports. Nordic combined was the only Olympic sport, summer or winter, with no space for female participation, an exclusion so stark that the IOC considered removing it from the program altogether prior to Milano Cortina. It ultimately did so in July 2026, citing a drop in participation numbers and lack of geographic diversity. The decision to remove Nordic combined from the program for men rather than adding it to the program for women is a curious one — as women compete in ski jumping and cross-country skiing, the two elements that make up the sport. There is a significant enough population of competitive female Nordic combined athletes to merit the sport's inclusion in the Winter Games for women.

The role of the NCAA as an Olympic pathway continued to be significant in Milano Cortina. In the 2026 Winter Games, 86 athletes from 32 NCAA schools won a medal, while five Paralympic medalists — including two guides — from five NCAA schools combined to win eight medals (seven gold) for the United States (National Collegiate Athletic Association [NCAA], 2026c). Nowhere was the impact of the NCAA clearer than in women's hockey, where over 50% of all rosters came from NCAA institutions — 117 players (See Appendix A2 on page 52). While both Canada and the United States fielded rosters that were 100% NCAA athletes, the global reach of the NCAA and the workings of Title IX continue to be impressive, with Sweden (8), Finland (5), France (5), Czechia (4), Germany (4), Switzerland (4), and Italy (3) all fielding athletes currently playing for U.S. schools (See Appendix A2 on page 52) (NCAA, 2022, 2026b).[4] Further, NCAA athletes scored 73% of the tournament's goals and 90% of the playoff goals, and the eight quarterfinalist teams featured 113 NCAA athletes across 184 roster spots (61%) (NCAA, 2026a).[5]

3 Consistent with IOC usage, "equality" refers to parity in representation, while "equity" is used to assess fairness in opportunity and treatment.

4 Per a 2021 NCAA study, 47% of NCAA hockey players are international students (NCAA, 2022).

5 While the Para-College Inclusion Program, a partnership between the NCAA and the USOPC, started in 2022, it is likely too new to gauge the impact yet from its efforts to spotlight schools that offer adaptive sport.

The impact of these Games has continued since the Closing Ceremony, particularly in terms of women's hockey. USA Hockey announced that for the first time, 100,000 women and girls were registered to play, a 257% increase since women's hockey debuted at the 1998 Olympic Winter Games (USA Hockey, 2026). Tickets for the Professional Women's Hockey League reached new heights; a game between the New York Sirens and the Montreal Victoire on March 28th became the first to be nationally televised (ION Network). On April 4, the Sirens won before a sold-out crowd — 18,006 — in New York's Madison Square Garden (New York Times), somewhat solidifying the arrival of the relatively new women's professional hockey league in the United States.

The Paralympic Winter Games also underscored both progress and persistent inequities, as women Paralympians continue to fight for equal event offerings and classification opportunities while also producing some of the most riveting performances of the Games. Athletes such as Oksana Masters, the most decorated American winter Paralympic athlete, competed within an increasingly international and competitive field, where European and Asian Paralympians are looking to close historical gaps in access and support.

Women Paralympians remain underrepresented, with 159 female athletes competing, accounting for 26.1% of all Paralympians in 2026. While this is an increase in both number and percentage from the 2022 Paralympic Winter Games, it remains drastically inequitable for female Paralympians. Of 79 events in six sports, women competed in 40 (50.6%) events, including five mixed events, and men competed in 44 (55.7%). Mixed events in the Paralympic Winter Games do not result in more women competing, with two female hockey players out of 135 (1.5%) and 25 of 66 (37.9%) wheelchair curling athletes.

The host nation had one of the most compelling narratives regarding gender parity and investment. Historically, Italy has been stronger in men's winter disciplines, but a noticeable strategic shift by the Italian National Olympic Committee and affiliated winter sport federations strengthened women's programs in the lead-up to 2026. Italy fielded 196 athletes, including 93 women (47%, up from 44% in Beijing) — its most gender-balanced Winter Games team to date — and finished fourth overall with 30 medals (10 gold, six silver, 14 bronze) — its best Winter Olympic result. While Italian women won none of the country's gold medals in Torino in 2006, they accounted for 10 of the 22 individual medals and the majority of gold medals (six) in Milano Cortina, including short track speed skater Arianna Fontana, the country's most decorated Winter Olympian, (one gold, two silver for 14 career medals); speed skater Francesca Lollobrigida (two gold); and Alpine skiers Federica Brignone (two gold) and Sofia Goggia (one bronze, becoming the first woman to win three consecutive medals in downhill). Italian women also had historic firsts: Lisa Vittozzi secured Italy's first Olympic gold in women's biathlon, and Andrea Voetter and Marion Oberhofer nabbed the country's first women's double luge title.

Italy's success can be connected to long-term investment and development. First, there were targeted increases in areas that disproportionately benefited female athletes, including access to high-performance training centers, sports science resources, and military/police sports groups.[6] In addition, an Italian study started in 2000 tracked 55 athletes who became mothers but returned to elite competition (Bianchedi et al, 2022). The study concluded that motherhood did not need to be an athlete's endpoint if proper support was funded, including new training protocols for pregnancy and postpartum recovery, as well as the reintegration period into high-level competition. The country also invested in maternity support policies that protected rank, made smoother return-to-play protocols, and provided childcare and family travel funding.

The support for Italy's female athletes at these Milano Cortina Games may have extended similarly to the Paralympians, with Italy including five women (12.2%) on its Paralympic team. Four years prior, the Italian Paralympic team included only two female athletes.

While Italy's success with its female athletes was a highlight of these Games, Italy lags, like most countries, when it comes to **leadership**. Only 7% of its national team coaches are women, and just two of 50 sport federations are led by women, underscoring a common tension found in many teams in which a disconnect between performance and power exists (Flak & Vagnoni, 2026).

Investment in athletes can produce historic results while institutional power remains uneven at best, ensuring that the real gender inequality has shifted off the field of competition. The data is stark: Only 26.9% of top sport federation leadership roles are held by women, and tales of biased Olympic infrastructure, including equipment and work gear designed primarily for men at Milano Cortina 2026 sites, served as explicit examples of the impact (Sport Integrity Global Alliance, 2023; Vagnoni, 2026).

Leadership within both the IOC and IFs thus also shapes the conditions under which participation occurs. The IOC has established a minimum target of 30% women in decision-making roles, with an aspirational goal of parity. As of January 2026, women hold approximately 44.3% of IOC membership and 40% of Executive Board positions. However, representation across International Federations and National Olympic Committees remains inconsistent and often well below 30%.

Likewise, leadership within Paralympic structures remains uneven. While the IPC Governing Board reached parity for the first time, women occupy only 17.9% of NPC positions, a decrease from previous years.

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6 *In Italy, the connection between sports and military/police operates as an institutional employment system. In place of a system of corporate sponsorships, the Italian government recruits athletes into specialized military and police sports groups. Athletes enrolled in this program receive a government salary, benefits, and access to elite training facilities in exchange for representing their respective corps and national team in international competition.*

While the IOC and IPC have made visible strides toward gender balance in their membership and executive structures, disparities remain across other organizations, where decision-making power often lags the rhetoric of inclusion. The presence (or absence) of women in leadership roles directly influences everything from event programming to resource allocation. Figures such as Kirsty Coventry, the first woman and first African to serve as IOC president, signal a shifting landscape, yet also highlight how exceptional such appointments still are.

Finally, **media coverage**, particularly in the digital and social media age, negotiated how audiences encountered women's sport in Milano Cortina and revealed a complex mix of progress, imbalance, and possibility. In recent years, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have allowed high-profile athletes such as Eileen Gu and Mikaela Shiffrin to bypass traditional gatekeepers, crafting their own narratives and building global followings. These platforms have been significant for international athletes, whose visibility is no longer dependent on U.S.-centric broadcast priorities. European stars, Asian athletes, and competitors from smaller federations have leveraged social media to globalize their reach. At the same time, official channels, from U.S. rights holder NBC to the IOC accounts, can reflect disparities in commentary and framing, which impact algorithmic amplification, ensuring that, while visibility can empower, it also can expose.

In Milano Cortina, women received the majority of visual coverage (55% compared to 45% for men), reinforcing trends identified in Paris 2024, while Paralympic coverage showed women in 43.7% of images — nearly double their participation rate of 23%, signaling increased visibility even amid structural inequities. However, quantity does not necessarily equate to equity in representation: Male athletes were more often depicted in active, performance-based roles, while women were more likely to appear in metacommunicative or celebratory contexts, a pattern shaped in part by women's medal success and prominence in individual sports.

In the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games, women were more frequently portrayed as passive, while men dominated celebratory imagery, though overall coverage remained relatively balanced. Importantly, these patterns also point toward meaningful opportunities for transformation. Notably, the Team USA Instagram account offers a model for equitable storytelling by consistently presenting male and female athletes — and Paralympians in particular — as skilled, competitive athletes first, exemplified by inclusive posts such as the unified gold-medal graphic featuring the men's, women's, and sled hockey teams.



Marianne Fatton of Team Switzerland (shown leading Marianna Jagercikova of Team Slovakia) won the first Olympic ski mountaineering women's sprint gold medal. Ski mountaineering marks the first new sport at the Games since 2002.

Part II: The Full Report

Without question, Milano Cortina 2026 marked a moment of extraordinary momentum: more women competing than ever before, more sports with women's events, a woman at the helm of the IOC, a gender-balanced IPC, and a rapidly growing media audience hungry for their performances. Yet, beneath the competition, this report reveals a persistently uneven landscape: women lack access to winter sport, which is expensive, climate-dependent, and geographically skewed, limiting who gets to the Olympic and Paralympic stage; women remain underrepresented in coaching and leadership roles that shape decisions on everything from athlete safety to event development; and women's sports still receive less comprehensive media coverage than men's.

The full report continues the work of the WSF, illuminating where women's sport has made meaningful gains and where structural change remains urgently needed, demonstrating how this is a moment filled with both promise and urgency. The research behind this report interrogates what the historic percentage of female participation means and what it demands, focusing on those who broadcast women's performances, train and elevate female leaders, and build pathways of participation to get girls and young women interested in winter sport in the first place. Perhaps most importantly, it calls for the imagination to envision a future for global sport in which gender equity is not a campaign slogan but the default setting, one that ensures that the institutions that create, support, and cover winter sport can evolve fast enough to support the thousands of women who take part.

What emerges from our data demonstrates an athlete pipeline that is widening but uneven, institutional and systemic structures that have not yet adapted to match the pace of change, and a global audience ready for parity. Will women's winter sport continue its upward trajectory, or will 2026, with its packed hockey arenas, serve as a plateau rather than a launching point? The findings that follow outline the actions required to ensure the former, offering stakeholders — whether policymakers, media partners, or federations — the evidence to create clearer roadmaps, with specific, actionable recommendations made in each section and full data available in the Appendices for anyone seeking deeper insight. As we celebrate the accomplishments of women in Milano Cortina, we also must understand how, without coordinated and targeted intervention and structural reform, the trajectory toward gender equity risks stalling just as momentum is building.

Participation

Historical Background of Women's Participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

Pierre de Coubertin and a group of 13 men established the IOC in 1894. One of the reasons de Coubertin started the IOC and the Olympic Games was to create a festival where young men could display their athletic prowess. De Coubertin was strongly influenced in his decision to restrict the competitors to men by traditions derived from the ancient Olympic Games as well as social mores of the late 19th century. According to de Coubertin (1912), an Olympiad with females would be "impractical, uninteresting, ungainly, and … improper" (p. 111). The first Modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896 and included no women competitors, coaches, or officials. Women were included for the first time in the 1900 Games at Paris, in the sports of golf and tennis. Figure skating, an event now held during the Olympic Winter Games, was first contested in summer at the 1908 Games in London and again during the 1920 Games in Antwerp. Women were included as participants in the ladies' figure skating event as well as the mixed pairs event. Madge Syers of the United Kingdom won the first ladies' figure skating event in London. In another example of including a winter sport in the summer Games, men's ice hockey made its debut at the 1920 Games (women's ice hockey would wait another 68 years, debuting at the 1998 Games in Nagano).

The Olympic Winter Games were established in 1924. The "International Winter Sports Week" held that year in Chamonix, France, was retroactively named the first Olympic Winter Games. Women made up 11 of 258 participants (4.3%) in these first Winter Games. These Games included six sports and 16 events; of these, women were included in two events: individual and mixed pairs figure skating. In 1928, female figure skaters accounted for 5.6% (26 women) of the Olympians. Ladies' figure skating was dominated by Norway's Sonja Henie when she won gold in 1928, 1932, and 1936. It was not until 1936 that a second sport, Alpine skiing, was added for women. The women's combined event was offered, with 37 women from 13 countries participating in the new sport. Christl Cranz of Germany won the event.

By 1948, three events were offered to women in Alpine skiing (downhill, slalom, and Alpine combined), giving female athletes five total events. Cross-country skiing added the 10km race for women at the 1952 Games, which Lydia Wideman of Finland won. A cross-country skiing relay was added in 1956. Speed skating added four events in 1960 (500m, 1,000m, 1,500m, and 3,000m). Luge included women as competitors for the first time in 1964.

Women continued to be included in all Olympic Winter Games with the percentage of female participants exceeding 20% for the first time in 1960 in Squaw Valley (21.7%), although the percentage of women dipped below 20% over the next two Winter Olympiads, finally coming back above 20% in the 1972 Games in Sapporo (20.4%).

The participation of women exceeded 30% for the first time in 1994 in Lillehammer (30.1%), and women's ice hockey was added as a sport in 1998, with six countries competing for the first gold medal in the sport, with the United States winning gold and Canada, silver, and Finland, bronze. The inclusion of women's ice hockey has contributed to larger rosters of women for those countries qualifying in the sport. Women's ice hockey expanded to include eight teams in 2002 and, in 2022, expanded to the current 10-team tournament.

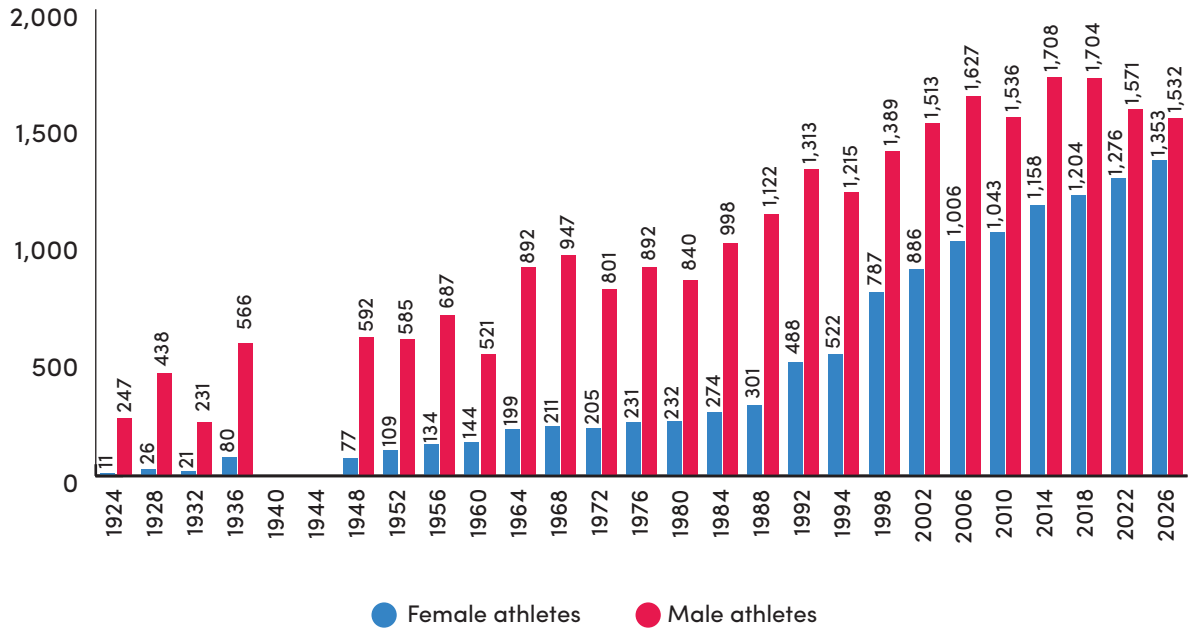
Women were 38.3% of participants in the 2006 Winter Games in Turin. Out of 84 events at the 2006 Games, women did not compete in ski jumping, Nordic combined, four-person bobsled or doubles luge. At the 2010 Games in Vancouver, women did not compete in ski jumping and Nordic combined. Ski cross was introduced for female and male athletes at the 2010 Games. In 2014, the ski halfpipe, ski slopestyle, snowboard slopestyle, biathlon mixed relay, figure skating team event, and luge team relay were added for both men and women. Women competed in ski jumping for the first time in 2014, accounted for 43.9% of ski jumpers in 2022, and achieved 50% participation in 2026. Nordic combined remained the only sport exclusive to men in 2026, while four-man bobsleigh is an event exclusive to men.

The 2026 Winter Games marked the greatest percentage and highest number of female athletes in Winter Games history (see Figure 1). Of the events that women currently participate in, 11 were initiated significantly later than the respective men's events, 17 began at the same time as the respective men's events, and two were initiated before the respective men's events.

The first Paralympic Winter Games were held in 1976 in Örnsköldsvik, Sweden. Almost 200 athletes from 16 countries competed in Alpine and cross-country skiing. At the Örnsköldsvik Winter Games, women competed in 13 Alpine events (men competed in 15) and 10 cross-country events (men competed in 15). The IPC added ice sledge speed racing in the 1980 Games in Geilo, Norway, with eight events for men and six events for women. When the IPC included the biathlon in 1988, it did so only for men. Women first participated six years later. The 1988 Games in Innsbruck, Austria, were the last Paralympic Winter Games held separately from the Olympic Winter Games, joining the festivities in Albertville, France, in 1992.

Though the IPC introduced sledge hockey in 1994 as a mixed event, only one woman competed in the inaugural tournament, Norwegian Britt Mjaasund Øyen. Despite its mixed status, ice sledge hockey (now called para ice hockey) is dominated by male athletes, with only five female athletes competing in the sport's Paralympic history. Norwegian Lena Schrøder became only the second female para ice hockey player at the Paralympic Games in 2018, and China's Yu Jing became the third in 2022. In 2026, two women were on rosters: Japan's Akari

Figure 1. The Number of Female and Male Athletes in the Olympic Winter Games, 1924-2026



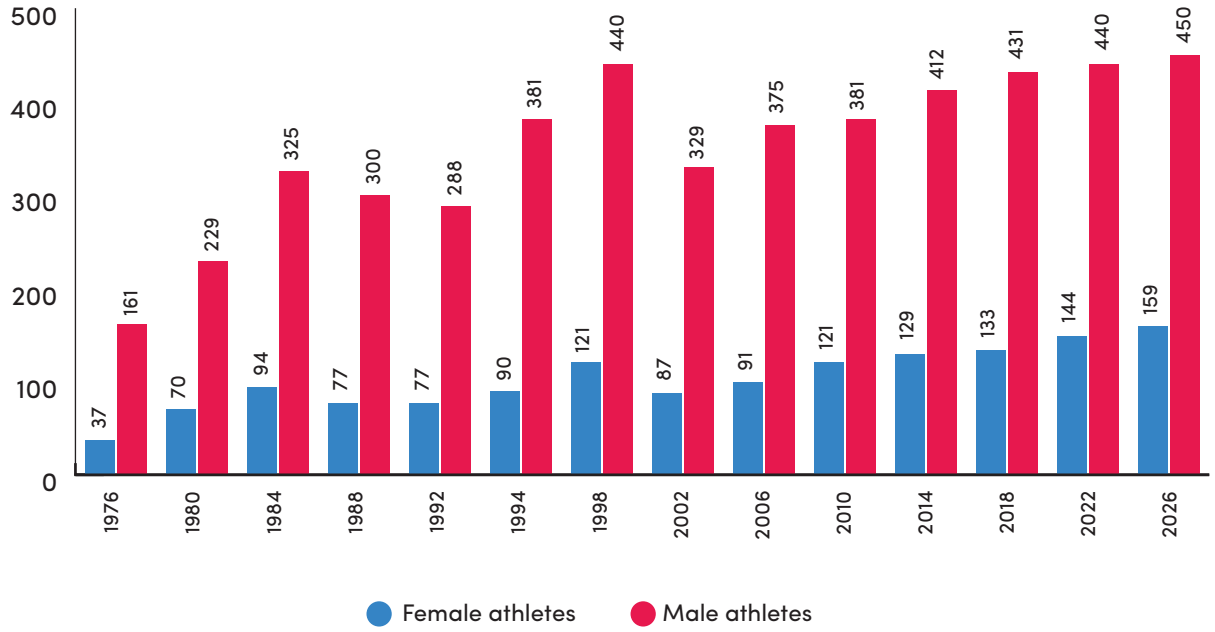
Fukanishi, who played, and Croatia's Michaela Hozokova, who was on the roster as a substitute but was not utilized in a game. The IPC added ice sledge speed racing for men and women in 1998 (this event is no longer offered) and wheelchair curling as a mixed event in 2006. Para snowboard was included as part of the Alpine skiing events in 2014 and made its debut as its own sport in 1998, offering events for three classifications: SB-LL1 (para athletes with more severe lower limb impairments), SB-LL2 (para athletes with less severe lower limb impairments, and SB-UL (para athletes with upper limb impairments). Para snowboard remains a sport with more events for male athletes (six events for men and two for women in 2026) and more male athletes competing, with 62 men and 15 women in 2026. In total, 159 women and 450 men competed in the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games (see Figure 2).

Sport and Medal Events at the 2026 Olympic Games

The 2026 Olympic Winter Games had a total of 116 events, with 54 events for men (46.6%), 50 events for women (43.1%), and 12 mixed events (10.3%). Changes to the program included the introduction of a new sport, ski mountaineering, offering three events: men, women, and mixed relay. In its debut, ski mountaineering was gender-equitable, with the same number of events and athletes for men and women. Ski mountaineering marks the first new sport at the Games since 2002. Doubles luge was added as a new event for female lugers, an event already offered to male lugers. Since 2014, mixed luge was offered as an event, but only male athletes had competed in it. Dual moguls was introduced as a new event for male and female freestyle skiers. For the first time since their inclusion at the Games in 2014, female ski jumpers were able to compete in the large hill event, using the same facility as the male ski jumpers. Two mixed-sport events were introduced: mixed skeleton and Alpine skiing — team combined.

A significant shift occurred in cross-country skiing to make the sport more gender-equitable, specifically by changing distances so men and women compete in the same distances. In the freestyle interval starts, men and women both skied 10km (men had previously skied 15km). The winner of the women's event, Frida Karlsson of Sweden, won in 22 minutes, 49.2 seconds, besting 67 male skiers in the men's event. The skiathlon event was 20km for both men and women (women's previous distance was 15km), with Karlsson winning her second gold in a time of 53 minutes, 45.2 seconds, her time better than 15 male skiers. In the classical mass start, men and women skied 50km, the first time women skied this distance at the Winter Games, up from their previous race distance of 30km. Karlsson's teammate, Ebba Andersson, won with a time of 2 hours, 16 minutes, and 28.2 seconds, crossing the finish line before 43 male skiers. To be clear, men and women did not compete at the same time, but the same distances do allow for a direct comparison of times. Fundamentally, offering the same distances to male and female skiers allows athletes and audiences alike to recognize female

Figure 2. The Number of Female and Male Athletes in the Paralympic Winter Games, 1976–2026



athletes' abilities. Shorter distances had been offered to women for many Olympiads based on outdated medical ideas around the perceived weaknesses of the female body.

Similarly, in ski jumping, women jumped on the same large hill as their male counterparts for the first time, with Anna Odine Strom winning with 284.8 points, including a 130.5m jump, which was further than half the competitors in the men's large hill competition achieved.

This strategic shift did not extend to all winter sports (see Table 1). Biathlon, short track speed skating, and speed skating continue to offer events for men in longer distances. In biathlon, men compete in the individual 20m, while women compete in the individual 15km. The men's sprint distance is 10km compared to the women's at 7.5km. In pursuit, men ski 12km, and women ski 10km, and the mass start for men is 15km and 12.5km for women. The relay for men is four legs of 7.5km, while the women ski legs of 6km. In short track speed skating, men skate in the 5,000m relay and women skate in the 3,000m relay in short track speed skating, despite competing in individual races longer than the relay distances. In speed skating, men compete in the 5,000m (20 men) and 10,000m (12 men) races, with women competing in the 3,000m (20 women) and 5,000m (12 women) races.

Table 1. The Number of Winter Olympic Events and Entries by Gender, 2026

116 Total events	**Men's events (54 events)**	**Women's events (50 events)**	**Mixed events (12 events)**
Alpine skiing (10 events)	5 events Downhill – 36 Giant slalom – 81 Slalom – 96 Super G – 42 Team – 21 pairs	5 events Downhill – 36 Giant slalom – 77 Slalom – 95 Super G – 43 Team – 28 pairs	
Biathlon (11 events)	5 events Individual 20m – 89 Sprint 10km – 90 Pursuit 12.5km – 60 Mass start 15km – 30 Relay 4 x 7.5km – 20 teams	5 events Individual 15m – 90 Sprint 7.5 km – 91 Pursuit 10km – 59 Mass start 12.5 – 30 Relay 4 x 6km – 20 teams	1 event Mixed 4 x6km relay – 21 teams
Bobsleigh (4 events)	2 events Two-man – 53 Four-man – 109	2 events Monobob – 25 Two-man – 50	
Cross-country skiing (12 events)	6 events Distance Freestyle interval start, 10km – 113 (first time since 1998, distance lowered to match with women's distance) Skiathlon, 20km, down from 30km – 75 Classical mass start, 50km – 62 Relay, 4 x 7.5km – 40 athletes (10 teams) Sprint Individual (classical) – 95 Team – 54 (27 pairs)	6 events Distance Freestyle interval start, 10km – 111 Skiathlon, 20km, up from 15km – 70 Classical mass start, 50km (up from 30km) – 41 Relay, 4 x 7.5km – 76 (19 teams) Sprint Individual (classical) – 89 Team – 52 (26 pairs)	
Curling (3 events)	1 event Team – 50 men (10 teams)	1 event Team – 50 women (10 teams)	1 event Mixed doubles – 20 athletes (10 teams)
Figure skating (5 events)	1 event Singles – 29	1 event Singles – 29	3 events Pairs – 19 teams Ice dance – 23 teams Team event – 10 teams (23 singles, 9 pairs teams, 11 ice dance pairs)

Table 1. The Number of Winter Olympic Events and Entries by Gender, 2026 (cont.)

116 Total Events	Men's Events (54 Events)	Women's Events (50 Events)	Mixed Events (12 Events)
Freestyle Skiing (15 Events)	7 events Aerials – 24 Big air – 29 Halfpipe – 25 Moguls – 30 Dual moguls – 29 Ski cross – 31 Slopestyle – 29	7 events Aerials – 25 Big air – 27 Halfpipe – 21 Moguls – 30 Dual moguls – 30 Ski cross – 32 Slopestyle – 26	1 event Aerials – mixed – 21 athletes (7 teams)
Ice Hockey (2 Events)	1 event Men's tournament – 12 teams	1 event Women's tournament – 10 teams	
Luge (5 Events)	2 events Singles – 25 Doubles – 34	2 events Singles – 25 Doubles – 22	1 event Mixed – 9 teams of 6 athletes, 3 females, 3 males
Nordic Combined (3 Events)	3 events Individual (large hill/10km) – 36 Individual (normal hill/10km) – 36 Team (large hill/2 x 7.5km) – 28 athletes (14 pairs)		
Short-Track Speed Skating (9 Events)	4 events 500m – 32 1,000m – 32 1,500m – 36 5,000m relay – 32 athletes (8 teams)	4 events 500m – 32 1,000m – 32 1,500m – 36 3,000m relay – 35 athletes (8 teams)	1 event 2,000m relay – 60 athletes (12 teams)
Skeleton (3 Events)	1 event Individual – 24	1 event Individual – 25	1 event Mixed – 30 (10 teams)
Ski Mountaineering (3 Events)	1 event Individual – 18	1 event Individual – 18	1 event Team – mixed – 24 athletes (12 teams)
Snowboarding (11 Events)	5 events Big air – 30 Halfpipe – 25 Parallel giant slalom – 32 Slopestyle – 30 Snowboard cross – 32	5 events Big air – 29 Halfpipe – 24 Parallel giant slalom – 32 Slopestyle – 30 Snowboard cross – 32	1 event Snowboard cross team – 16 teams of 2
Speed Skating (14 Events)	7 events 500m – 29 1,000m – 29 1,500m – 30 5,000m – 20 10,000m – 12 Mass start – 29 Team pursuit – 28 (8 teams)	7 events 500m – 29 1,000m – 30 1,500m – 29 3,000m – 20 5,000m – 12 Mass start – 27 Team pursuit – 26 (8 teams)	

When looking at the number of entries in each event, most of them show gender equity, with the same number of men and women competing. This is reflected in the overall number of male and female participants in all sports, except for bobsleigh, ice hockey, and, of course, Nordic combined, a sport exclusive to male athletes (see Table 2).

While IOC officials did issue a report predicting they would achieve gender equity by the 2026 Winter Games, they did not tout the gains and how close they were, as they did at the 2024 Games, where, despite their claims, they still fell short. Both summer and winter Games are set up in such a way that equal participation cannot be achieved without structural changes to the program, such as adding two more teams to women's ice hockey. While the IOC may claim that there are not enough quality teams to field a 12-team tournament, this is inconsistent with the IOC's decision to include flag football in the summer Games program. Flag football is a sport played in the United States, recently promoted for girls and women, largely a result of the NFL's support to continue to grow its fan base. One could easily argue that there are not enough quality teams to field an eight-team tournament in men's and women's flag football, but as is often the case, the IOC is offering a program to meet a variety of needs and desires. Softball was a summer sport eliminated from the Olympic program due to lack of competitive teams or perhaps global interest; however, softball has been reinstated for the 2028 Games in Los Angeles. Following the 2026 Winter Games, Nordic combined was eliminated for men, with an explanation of lack of global interest rather than the IOC working to achieve equity in the sport and the Olympic program. The decision to eliminate Nordic combined is troubling, as there are other sports with a similar number of competitors, such as the new sport of ski mountaineering, with 18 men and 18 women. Adding 36 women to Nordic combined would be a much more equitable solution than eliminating the sport and cutting 36 male athletes. Similarly, adding two women's teams to ice hockey would still leave a small gap, as the men's roster has 25 players and the women's 23, which also could be addressed by allowing women to add two additional players.

Table 2. 2026 Olympic Winter Games Athletes by Sport

Sport	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
Alpine Skiing	153	153	306	50%	50%
Biathlon	105	105	210	50%	50%
Bobsleigh	115	55	170	67.6%	32.4%
Cross-Country Skiing	147	148	295	49.8%	50.2%
Curling	55	57	112	49.1%	50.9%
Figure Skating	74	73	147	50.3%	49.7%
Freestyle Skiing	141	139	280	50.4%	49.6%
Ice Hockey	300	230	530	56.6%	43.4%
Luge	58	47	105	55.2%	44.8%
Nordic Combined	36	0	36	100%	0%
Short Track Speed Skating	57	55	112	50.9%	48.1%
Skeleton	25	25	50	50%	50%
Ski Jumping	50	50	100	50%	50%
Ski Mountaineering	16	16	32	50%	50%
Snowboarding	117	119	236	49.6%	50.4%
Speed Skating	83	81	164	50.6%	49.4%
Totals	**1,532**	**1,353**	**2,885**	**53.1%**	**46.9%**

Sports and Medal Events at the 2026 Paralympic Games

The 2026 Paralympic Winter Games offered 79 events in six sports. Thirty-nine events were exclusive to male athletes, accounting for 49.3% of the program, while events exclusive to female athletes accounted for 44.3% (35) (see Table 3). Four additional snowboarding events for men are the only structural inequity in the program. Considering the opportunity of the five mixed events, male athletes had access to 55.7% of the program and female athletes had access to just over half of the events, at 50.6%. However, these five mixed events, while open to both men and women, do not constitute a reality of gender-integrated/co-ed sport. In 2026, 133 men and two women (1.5%) competed in para ice hockey, despite it being a mixed sport. Notably, the two women competing in para ice hockey are the highest number in Paralympic history. It's important to note that when a female athlete is added to the para ice hockey roster, she is not taking a participation spot from a male athlete but is rather an additional player. This has not encouraged other NPCs to include a woman on their rosters, and the IPC does not require that at least one woman is on each para ice hockey team. Wheelchair curling does offer a mixed-sport opportunity for women, and it is in this sport that women have their highest percentage of participation at 37.9%. Wheelchair curling does require that each team include at least one woman on their rosters; this accounts, in part, for the greater participation of females in the sport than para ice hockey.



Meng Wang of Team China (with teammate Jinqiao Yang) won gold in the wheelchair curling mixed doubles Paralympic debut.

Table 3. The Number of Winter Paralympic Events and Entries by Gender, 2026

79 Total Events	Men's Events (39)	Women's Events (35)	Mixed Events (5)
Para Alpine Skiing (30)	15 events	15 events	
	Downhill -sitting – 23 -standing – 27 -visually impaired – 11	Downhill -sitting – 7 -standing – 12 -visually impaired – 7	
	Giant slalom -sitting – 37 -standing – 41 -visually impaired – 19	Giant slalom -sitting – 16 -standing – 22 -visually impaired – 15	
	Slalom -sitting – 34 -standing – 34 -visually impaired – 18	Slalom -sitting – 16 -standing – 21 -visually impaired – 16	
	Super combined -sitting – 24 -standing – 26 -visually impaired – 14	Super combined -sitting – 7 -standing – 15 -visually impaired – 9	
	Super-G -sitting – 27 -standing – 33 -visually impaired – 14	Super-G -sitting – 7 -standing – 15 -visually impaired – 9	

Table 3. The Number of Winter Paralympic Events and Entries by Gender, 2026 (cont.)

79 Total Events	Men's Events (39)	Women's Events (35)	Mixed Events (5)
Para Biathlon (18)	9 events Individual -sitting – 27 -standing – 19 -visually impaired – 13 Sprint -sitting – 28 -standing – 20 -visually impaired – 17 Sprint pursuit -sitting – 28 -standing – 19 -visually impaired – 18	9 events Individual -sitting – 12 -standing – 9 -visually impaired – 13 Sprint -sitting – 14 -standing – 11 -visually impaired – 14 Sprint pursuit -sitting – 12 -standing – 11 -visually impaired – 13	
Para Cross-Country Skiing (20)	9 events Sprint -sitting – 37 -standing – 30 -visually impaired – 17 Distance 10km -sitting – 31 -standing – 25 -visually impaired – 16 20km -sitting – 32 -standing – 30 -visually impaired – 18	9 events Sprint -sitting – 19 -standing – 17 -visually impaired – 14 Distance 10km -sitting – 21 -standing – 12 -visually impaired –11 20km -sitting – 15 -standing – 16 -visually impaired –13	2 events Relay Mixed – 35 competitors, 10 teams Open – 43 competitors, 12 teams
Para Ice Hockey			1 event 8-team tournament
Para Snowboard SB-LL1 – significant impairment in both legs SB-LL2 – impairment to one leg SB-UL – upper limb impairment	6 events Snowboard Cross SB-LL1 – 16 SB-LL2 – 16 SB-UL – 20 Banked Slalom SB-LL1 – 18 SB-LL2 – 20 SB-UL – 21	2 events Snowboard Cross SB-LL2 – 11 Banked Slalom SB-LL2 – 13	
Wheelchair Curling (2)			2 events Mixed teams – 10 teams (5 per team) Mixed doubles – 8 teams/pairs

The number and percentage of events for women show consistent progress; however, the number of female entries in each event still lags considerably behind their male counterparts, which is also evident in the overall numbers of men and women competing in the Paralympic Winter Games. While 44.3% of the events are exclusive to women, only 27.7% of the athletes at the Games are female. Table 4 highlights in stark detail the contrast between the number of female and male entries in all six sports. There is one single event among the 79 where women have an equal number of entries (13) as their male counterparts: para biathlon, individual, sitting event.

Some of the more notable differences in entries are in the downhill event, with 61 men competing in the three events alongside 26 women. Super combined accounts for another lopsided set of entries with 64 men and 31 women. Despite having the same number of events available in para Alpine skiing, 15 each, total male entries outnumber female entries, 382 (66.3%) to 194 (33.7%), though women account for 34.7% of all Paralympic skiers. Para cross-country and para biathlon are two sports that rely on a set of skiers, both male and female, who participate in both sports, and the number of entries by gender in both sports shows continued divides. For example, in the para biathlon sprint event, 65 men and 39 women competed. In the para cross-country 10km sitting event, 72 male skiers and 44 female skiers competed. In the Olympic Winter Games, cross-country skiing and biathlon are not sports in which the majority of the athletes in one of the sports also are competing for medals in the other sport. However, at the Paralympic Winter Games, the two sports rely on each other to provide quality competitors in both sports.

Para snowboard remains a sport that offers more opportunities for men than women, with four additional events, and with women competing in just one classification, SB-LL2, while men compete in three classifications, SB-LL1, SB-LL2, and SB-UL. Just comparing the number of entries in the SB-LL2 events for men and women, there were 36 male entries and 24 female entries. Women do compete in SB-LL1 and SB-UL in other para sport competitions, but at the Paralympic Games are entered into one classification.



Yunji Kim of Team Republic of Korea won the women's para biathlon individual sitting, giving Korea its first women's individual Paralympic Winter Games medal.

Table 4. 2026 Paralympic Winter Games Athletes by Sport

Sport	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
Para Alpine Skiing	106	57	163	65%	35%
Para Biathlon	67	40	107	62.6%	37.4%
Para Cross Country Skiing	103	57	160	64.4%	35.6%
Ice Hockey	133	2	135	98.5%	1.5%
Para Snowboard	61	15	76	80.3%	18.7%
Wheelchair Curling	41	25	66	62.1%	37.9%
Totals	**511***	**196***	**707***	**72.3%***	**27.7%***

**These totals are different from NPC totals because of the overlap between biathlon and cross-country skiing, with athletes competing in both sports, but counted in the overall numbers just once.*

No sport in the Paralympic Winter Games approaches equity for female athletes.

Female athletes account for over 30% of participants in four sports: para Alpine skiing, para biathlon, para cross-country skiing, and wheelchair curling. As noted earlier, a significant overlap exists between para biathlon and para cross-country skiing, which accounts for both sports exceeding 30% participation of female athletes.

Para snowboard continues to offer six events for male athletes and two for female athletes, based on level of physical impairment. Male snowboarders compete in LL-1, LL-2, and UL, while female snowboarders only compete in LL-2, leaving females in the LL-1 and UL classification without Paralympic competition opportunities.

The IPC began sharing data on the gender of sighted guides in 2014. Guides are used in three sports — Alpine skiing, para biathlon, and para cross-country skiing — for athletes competing in the visually impaired classifications. A guide can be paired with a Paralympian of either sex, though more often both male and female Paralympians have a male guide (see Table 5). At the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games, American Meg Gustafson, an Alpine skier, was guided by her brother, Spencer. While the Gustafson siblings did not medal in any events, guides do receive a medal along with their athlete. The Gustafson pairing highlighted the role of guides to a broader audience, and, in 2026, female guides achieved their highest participation rate in Paralympic history (22.6%).

Table 5. Paralympic Guides, by Gender, 2014–26

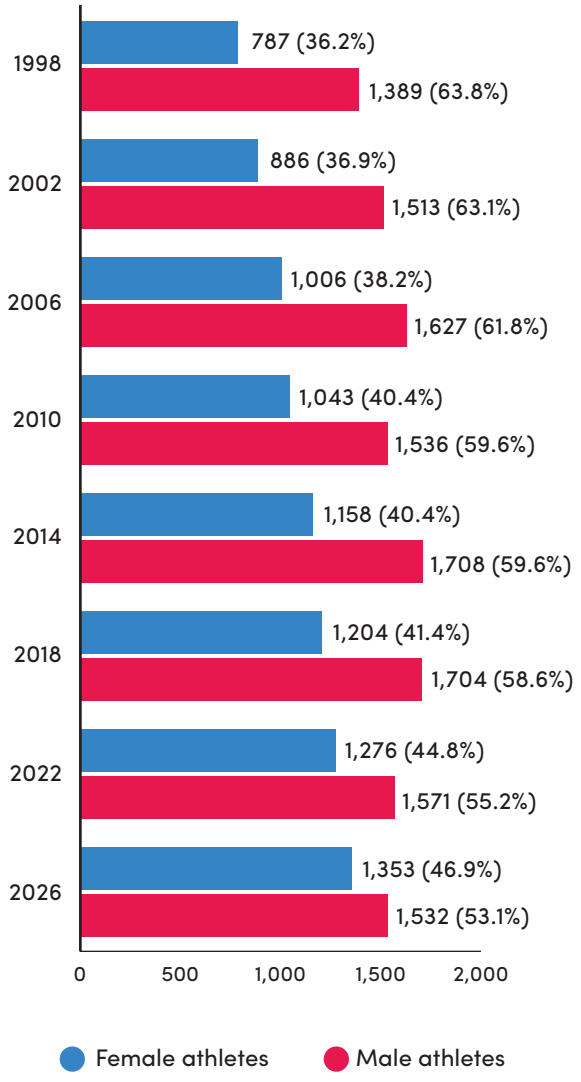
Paralympic Games	Male Guides	Female Guides
2014	50 (78.1%)	14 (21.9%)
2018	60 (82.2%)	13 (17.8%)
2022	52 (80%)	13 (20%)
2026	65 (77.4%)	19 (22.6%)

Note: The IPC began collecting data on guides for the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games.

The Olympic Winter Games in the 21st Century

There were 1,353 female athletes (46.9%) and 1,532 male athletes (53.1%) at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games, up from 1,276 female athletes (44.7%) and 1,581 male athletes (55.3%) in 2022 (see Figure 3). The increase of 76 female athletes was coupled with a decrease of 49 male athletes, unlike in previous years when both female and male athlete numbers increased. Ideally, both men and women would enjoy increased participation.

Figure 3. The Number and Percentage of Female and Male Athletes in the Olympic Winter Games, 1998–26



Of 93 NOCs participating in the 2026 Games, 35 NOCs (almost 38%) had more than 10 athletes, leaving 58 NOCs with smaller delegations of nine or fewer athletes. Of those 58 smaller NOCs, 17 included only one athlete (14 were all-male, and three were all-female). Twenty-two, up from 18 in 2022, of the 58 smaller delegations were exclusively male delegations. Three delegations (the same number as in 2022) did not send any male athletes. Of the 93 NOCs, three were first-time participants: Benin, Guinea-Bissau, and the United Arab Emirates. All three were among the 58 smaller delegations and brought athletes in Alpine skiing. Of the three, only the United Arab Emirates included a female in its delegation.

Four NOCs in 2026 exceeded 50% female participation: Japan, Canada, China, and the Czech Republic. Of these four NOCS, only Japan was among the six NOCs with at least 50% female participation in 2022. Only two NOCs, Canada (106) and the United States (115), had delegations that included over 100 female athletes. Of these NOCs with over 50% female participation, only China did not include a women's ice hockey team. The other three, Japan, Canada, and the Czech Republic, all included women's ice hockey teams, and those 23-woman rosters contributed to the gender equity of those NOCs. Notably, all 10 NOCs with women's ice hockey teams brought delegations with at least 44% female athletes. Table 6 shows the impact of the inclusion of women's ice hockey and provides an interesting contrast to Table 8 (on the following page), which shows the top NOCs by percentage of female participants. For example, Finland is the NOC with the highest percentage of female ice hockey players in its delegation relative to its female participants, with almost half (48.9%) of its female athletes being ice hockey players. However, in Table 8, Finland falls to 10th among NOCs in percentage of female participants, with 45.6%. Japan is the top NOC in Table 8 with 61.4% of female participants and is ranked sixth in Table 7 (on the following page), as their women's ice hockey percentage is 31.1% of their female participants. Japan was the only NOC to qualify a women's ice hockey team and not a men's team. (Latvia and Slovakia brought men's ice hockey teams but no women's ice hockey teams.) The United States holds the 10th spot on Table 6, with female ice hockey athletes accounting for 20% of its female participants, and ranks fifth on Table 8 with 49.6% female participation. As the only team sport in the Winter Games, the inclusion of a women's ice hockey team can significantly shift the overall numbers and percentages of female participation for that Olympiad (Pohanka, 2026; Guttman, 2026; Reuters, 2026; Yoshikawa, 2026).



Piera Hudson represented the United Arab Emirates in its first Olympic Winter Games appearance.

Table 6. NOCs with Women's Ice Hockey Teams, by Percentage and Number of Female Athletes and Female Hockey Players

NOC	% Female hockey players among female athletes (with % female athletes in total delegation in parentheses)	Number of female athletes (with number of hockey athletes in parentheses)
1. Finland	48.9% (45.6%)	47 (23)
2. Sweden	43.4% (48.2%)	53 (23)
3. Czech Republic	39% (50.9%)	59 (23)
4. Canada	33.8% (51.7%)	68 (23)
5. France	32.4% (44.4%)	71 (23)
6. Japan	31.1% (61.2%)	74 (23)
7. Switzerland	27.4% (48%)	84 (23)
8. Germany	26.7% (46.5%)	86 (23)
9. Italy	24.7% (47.4%)	93 (23)
10. United States	20% (49.6%)	115 (23)

The United States brought the largest delegation to Milano Cortina, with 117 male athletes and 115 female athletes, the largest delegation of women, for a total of 232 Olympians (see Table 7 on the following page). Despite bringing the largest delegation of female athletes, the United States ranked fifth in the percentage of female athletes among NOCs with more delegations larger than 100 athletes (see Table 8 on the following page).

Tables 7 and 8 show the largest delegations by the number of female athletes and the percentage of female athletes for all 12 delegations bringing 100 or more athletes. These tables include both the top nations with women, as well as the lower numbers brought by some of the larger delegations. Still, all 12 NOCs with 100 or more athletes achieved at least 44% female athletes in their delegations. Mid-range delegations, between 15 and 80 athletes, had a wider range of percentages, bringing between 22% and 70% female athletes in their delegations.

Table 7. Rankings of Delegations of 100 or More Athletes, by Number of Women in the Delegation

NOC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. United States	115	49.6%
2. Canada	106	51.7%
3. Italy	93	47.4%
4. Germany	86	46.5%
5. Switzerland	84	48%
6. Japan	74	61.2%
7. France	71	44.4%
8. Czech Republic	59	50.9%
9. China	54	54.4%
10. Sweden	53	48.2%
11. Austria	52	45.2%
12. Finland	47	45.6%

Table 8. Rankings of Delegations of 100 or More Athletes, by Percentage of Women in the Delegation

NOC	Percentage of Female Athletes	Number of Female Athletes
1. Japan	61.2%	74
2. China	54.4%	68
3. Canada	51.7%	106
4. Czech Republic	50.9%	59
5. United States	49.6%	115
6. Sweden	48.2%	53
7. Switzerland	48%	84
8. Italy	47.4%	93
9. Germany	46.5%	86
10. Finland	45.6%	47
11. Austria	45.2%	52
12. France	44.4%	71

Tables 9 and 10 (on following page) provide data for all delegations of 10 or more athletes, allowing one to see the differences between larger and smaller delegations and how each achieves gender equity. Australia, bringing a smaller delegation, topped the list of all delegations with 10 or more athletes, with 63% female participation. Ten delegations brought gender-balanced delegations of at least 50% female athletes.

Even when looking at the lowest percentages and numbers of female participants, there are signs of progress. No country with 10 or more athletes brought less than 22.4% female athletes in their delegations. Italy, the host country, ranked 10th among the worst delegations by percentage of female athletes with 41.4% (93 women), though these numbers are certainly moving toward equity (see Table 11 on the following page). Norway, the top medal-winning nation at the 2026 Games, ranked seventh-lowest in percentage of female athletes (31 women for 38.7%). To see the shifts in percentages and numbers since 2022, see Appendix A, Tables A1–A4 on page 49.

Table 9. The 2026 Olympic Winter Games: Top 10 Delegations for Women Relative to Their Male Delegations (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NOC	Percentage of Female Athletes	Number of Female Athletes
1. Australia	63%	37
2. Japan	61.2%	74
3. Croatia	57.1%	8
4. China	54.4%	68
5. Poland	53.5%	31
6. Lithuania	52.9%	9
7. Belgium	52.3%	30
8. Canada	51.7%	106
9. Czech Republic	50.9%	59
10. Kazakhstan	50%	18



Jakara Anthony of Team Australia won gold at the inaugural women's dual moguls event, becoming Australia's first Winter Olympic double gold medalist.

Table 10. The 2026 Olympic Winter Games: 10 Worst Delegations for Women by Number of Women (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NOC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. Brazil	4	28.6%
2. New Zealand	6	35.3%
T3. Hungary	7	43.7%
T3. Spain	7	35%
T5. Bulgaria	8	40%
T5. Croatia	8	57.1%
7. Lithuania	9	52.9%
8. Denmark	10	25.6%
9. Romania	11	39.3%
T10. Estonia	15	48.4%
T10. Latvia	15	22.4%

Table 11. The 2026 Olympic Winter Games: 10 Worst Delegations for Women Relative to Their Male Delegations (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NOC	Percentage of Female Athletes	Number of Female Athletes
1. Latvia	22.4%	15
2. Denmark	25.6%	10
3. Brazil	28.6%	4
4. Slovakia	32.1%	17
5. Spain	35%	7
6. New Zealand	35.3%	6
7. Norway	38.7%	31
8. Romania	39.3%	11
9. Bulgaria	40%	8
10. Italy	41.4%	93

Norway won the overall medal count and the most gold medals. See Table 12 for the top five NOCs in the medal count. There was a considerable amount of media attention given to Norway's success at the 2026 Games, with the small nation of 5.7 million winning the most medals, an accomplishment they've achieved at every Winter Games since 2014. Norway is one of the wealthiest countries in the world per capita, and the nation values exercise and sport participation for all, from young to old, from less skilled to elite. There is an emphasis on working hard, and less focus on specialization and competition for young athletes. While Norway was not among the largest delegations of 100 or more athletes, their mighty team of 80 athletes ended up on top (Jucca et al., 2026; Lutz, 2026; Riddell, 2026). Japan, fifth in the medal standings, won a record 24 medals, with 10 won by women and another 10 by mixed events athletes (Guttman, 2026; Yoshikawa, 2026). It comes as no surprise that four of the top five NOCs in the medal count come from the largest delegations.

Table 12. Top Five Medal Count, 2026 Winter Games

NOC (% female)	Total Medals	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1. Norway (38.7%)	41	18	12	11
2. United States (49.6%)	33	12	12	9
3. Italy (47.4%)	30	10	6	14
4. Germany (46.5%)	26	8	10	8
5. Japan (61.4%)	24	5	7	12



Maren Kirkeeide of Team Norway won the women's 7.5km biathlon sprint, helping Norway break its own record for the most gold medals won at a single Olympic Winter Games.

The Paralympic Winter Games in the 21st Century

At the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games, 450 (73.9%) male athletes and 159 (26.1%) female athletes, totaling 616 Paralympians, competed. Fifty-five National Paralympic Committee (NPC) delegations participated, with only 16 NPCs having delegations of 10 or more athletes. Of the remaining 39 NPCs with fewer than 10 athletes, 19 were male-only delegations (12 of these had only one male athlete). One of the smaller delegations was Russia, with only six athletes, and their attendance was notable as their NOC was not allowed to participate at the Olympic Games. There were five delegations (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Iceland, Israel, Liechtenstein) that were female-only, with four of those having only one female athlete. The Paralympic Winter Games are considerably smaller than the summer Paralympic Games. The 163 female athletes marked a record participation, as did the 26.1% of women. However, these data points are far from parity. There is progress worth celebrating, but these numbers show growth without parity.

Tables 13 and 14 include the numbers for all 16 delegations with 10 or more athletes. Both tables show the high and low numbers of female athletes included by the largest delegations, allowing for a comparison of all 16 delegations. For 2022 data related to Paralympic delegations and their percentage and number of female athletes, see Appendix A, Tables A5–A8 on page 50.

In the overall standings, China won the medal count, with 44 total medals (15 gold, 13 silver, 16 bronze); the United States finished second with 24 medals (13 gold, five silver, six bronze); and Russia finished third with 12 medals (eight gold, one silver, three bronze). Italy, the host nation, won 16 medals, with seven gold, seven silver, and two bronze.



Sheyne Vaspi of Team Israel competes during the Super-G leg of the para alpine skiing women's Alpine combined standing. Vaspi is Isreal's only Winter Paralympian. Isreal was one of five countries with all-female Paralympic delegations.

Table 13. Paralympic Winter Games, Larger Delegations (10 or More), by Number of Female Athletes

NPC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. USA	20	29.4%
2. China	19	27.1%
3. Canada	12	22.1%
4. Germany	11	27.5%
5. Japan	10	22.7%
6. Ukraine	8	32%
7. South Korea	6	30%
8. Australia	5	41.7%
9. Sweden	5	38.5%
10. France	5	15.4%
11. Great Britain	5	26.3%
12. Italy	5	12.2%
13. Austria	4	26.7%
14. Norway	4	14.3%
15. Slovakia	4	14.8%
16. Czech Republic	2	8.3%

Table 14. Paralympic Winter Games, Larger Delegations (10 or More), by Percentage of Female Athletes

NPC	Percentage of Female Athletes	Number of Female Athletes
1. Australia	41.7%	5
2. Sweden	38.5%	5
3. Ukraine	32%	8
4. South Korea	30%	6
5. USA	29.4%	20
6. Germany	27.5%	11
7. China	27.1%	19
8. Austria	26.7%	4
9. Great Britain	26.3%	5
10. Japan	22.7%	10
11. Canada	22.1%	12
12. France	15.4%	5
13. Slovakia	14.8%	4
14. Norway	14.3%	4
15. Italy	12.2%	5
16. Czech Republic	8.3%	2

United States at the 2026 Milano Cortina Games

The U.S. team delegation included 115 women and 117 men, leaving women just shy of 50% participation, at 49.6% of the American squad. The team won 12 gold medals, the most won by the United States at the Winter Games, and a total of 33 medals. While this is not the largest U.S. delegation in Winter Games history, it is the most equitable (see Figure 4).

The number of U.S. female Winter Olympians continues to climb slowly, increasing by 34 women since 1998. Male athletes, too, are holding steady, though each year men's participation rises and falls by a handful of athletes, as the women edge up closer in number.

Eight sports are equitable for the Americans, with the same number of men and women competing: biathlon, cross-country skiing, figure skating, freestyle skiing, skeleton, ski jumping, ski mountaineering, and snowboarding. American women make up more than 50% of the U.S. team in two sports: Alpine skiing (64.7%) and short track speed skating (62.5%). American men make up more than 50% of the U.S. team in six sports: bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, luge, Nordic combined, and speed skating. See Table 15 on the following page.

The American women's hockey team included Laila Edwards, the first African American woman to compete for the U.S. in ice hockey. African American women compete in NCAA hockey in low numbers: nine in 2015, nine in 2019, and 13 in 2025 (over 1,100 women play NCAA ice hockey, making the percentage of African American women less than 2%). Edwards's inclusion on the American team was noteworthy, and she scored two goals and six assists, becoming the first African American woman to win gold in ice hockey at the Winter Games (Haase, 2025; Thornton, 2025). While Edwards was the first African American woman to compete in Olympic ice hockey, women of color have competed previously in the sport for Canada, most notably Sarah Nurse in 2018, who was the first woman of color to win a gold medal in ice hockey in 2022. Canada's roster, in addition to Nurse, now includes Sophie Jacques. In North America and Europe, ice hockey is predominantly white, with Jordan Greenway in 2018 as the first and only African American on the U.S. men's roster. Canadian men's Olympic teams have included four men of color on recent rosters: Darren Lowe (1984), Claude Vilgrain (1988), P.K. Subban (2014), and Nick Suzuki (2026).



Laila Edwards became the first Black woman on U.S. women's Olympic hockey team.

Figure 4. The Number of U.S. Female and Male Athletes in the Olympic Winter Games, 1924–2026

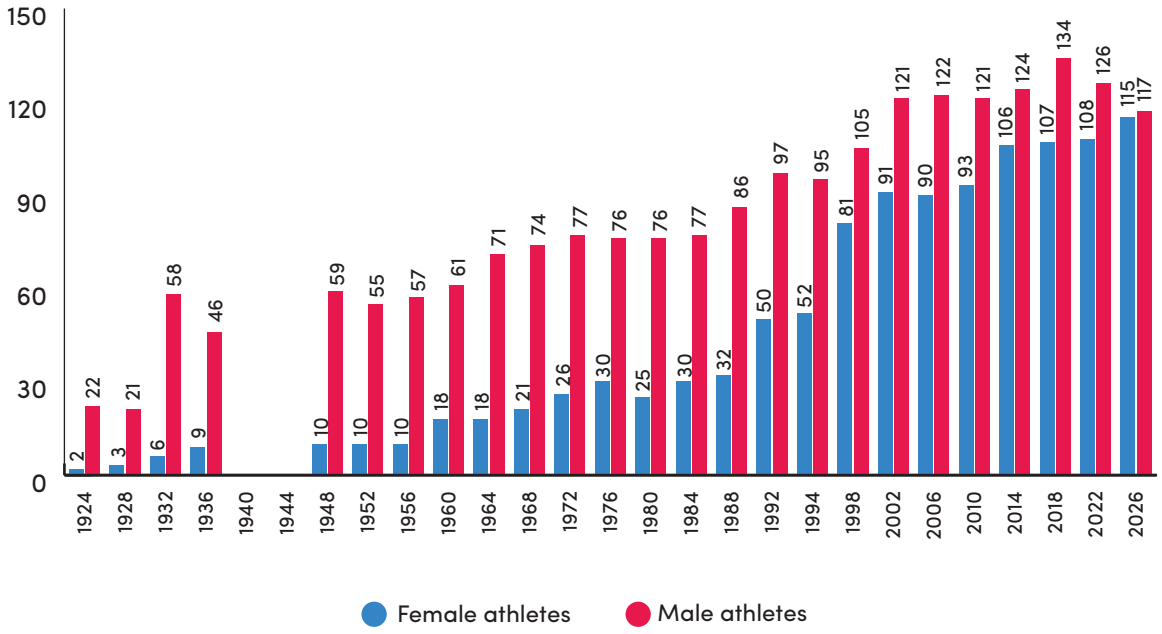


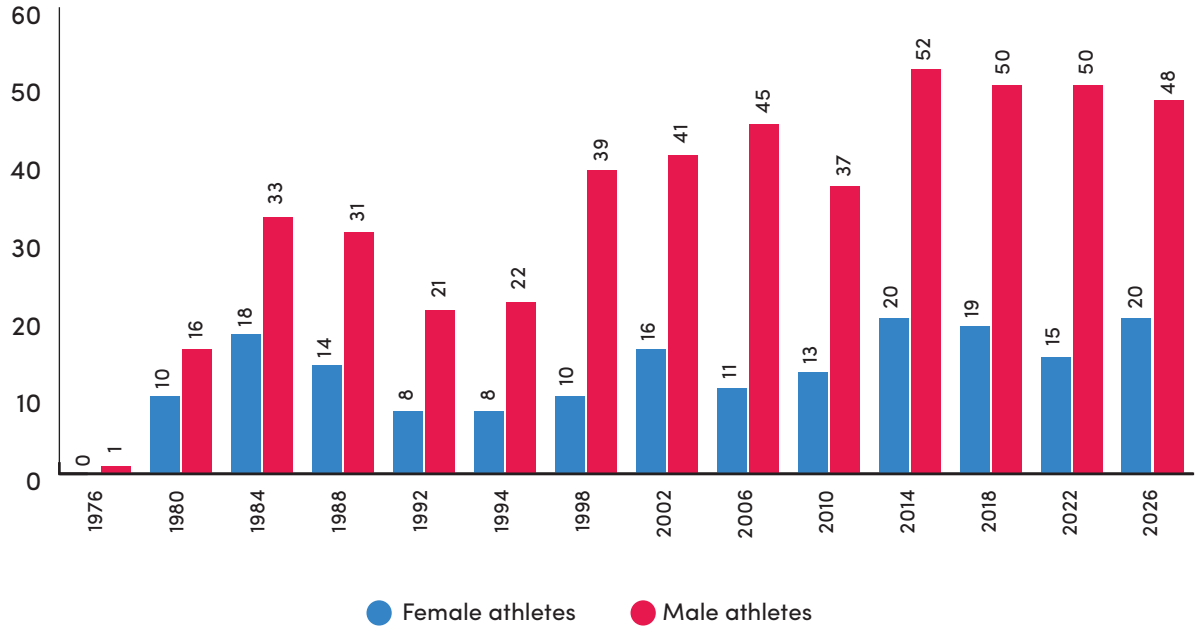
Table 15. 2026 Olympic Winter Games U.S. Athletes by Sport

Sport	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
Alpine Skiing	6	11	17	35.3%	64.7%
Biathlon	4	4	8	50%	50%
Bobsleigh	8	6	14	57.1%	42.9 %
Cross-country Skiing	8	8	16	50%	50%
Curling	6	5	11	54.5%	45.5%
Figure Skating	8	8	16	50%	50%
Freestyle Skiing	16	16	32	50%	50%
Ice Hockey	25	23	48	52.1%	47.9%
Luge	6	5	11	54.5%	45.5%
Nordic Combined	2	0	2	100%	0%
Short Track Speed Skating	3	5	8	37.5%	62.5%
Skeleton	2	2	4	50%	50%
Ski Jumping	3	3	6	50%	50%
Ski Mountaineering	1	1	2	50%	50%
Snowboarding	12	12	24	50%	50%
Speed Skating	7	6	13	53.8%	46.2%
Totals	**117**	**115**	**232**	**50.4%**	**49.6%**

U.S. Paralympic Team

The American Paralympic team reflects the Paralympic Winter Games' overall numbers: American women had slightly higher participation, with 20 athletes accounting for 29.6% of the U.S. team, their highest number (tied with 2014) and percentage. Men's participation is holding steady (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Number of U.S. Female and Male Athletes in the Paralympic Winter Games, 1976-2026



American men made up 70.4% of the team and accounted for over 50% of participants in all six Paralympic sports (see Table 16). Two sports with the highest proportion of female participants actually included the same athletes. The U.S. team fielded the same six women and seven men in both para biathlon and para cross-country skiing.

The American Paralympic team won 13 gold, five silver, and six bronze medals for 24 total medals, finishing second to China's 15 gold and 41 total medals. Of the 24 medals, 14 were won by American women, with a 15th won by a mixed relay. The Americans won their fifth consecutive gold medal in para ice hockey. Oksana Masters and Kendall Gretsch topped the individual medal lists for Americans, both para biathletes and para cross-country skiers. Masters won four gold medals and one bronze, while Masters won one gold, one silver, and two bronze medals.

Table 16. 2026 U.S. Paralympic Winter Games Athletes by Sport

Sport	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
Para Alpine Skiing	15	8	23	65.2	34.8
Para Biathlon	7	6	13	53.8	46.2
Para Cross-Country Skiing	7	6	13	53.8	46.2
Para Ice Hockey	17	0	17	100	0
Para Snowboard	5	3	8	62.5	37.5
Wheelchair Curling	4	3	7	57.1	42.9
Totals	**48**	**20**	**68**	**70.6**	**29.4**



©Alex Grimm/Getty Images

Oksana Masters of Team USA competes during the women's 10km para cross-country skiing sitting.

Leadership

Women in International Sport Governance Structure Leadership Positions

Summary of Findings: International Olympic Committee, National Olympic Committees, and Winter International Federations:

- Six women (40%) served on the 15-member IOC Executive Board. Kirsty Coventry was elected as the first female IOC President in 2025, ending over 100 years of male presidencies.
- The IOC exceeded the 30% female representation among its membership for the third time: 47 women (44.3%) served as IOC members in the lead-up to the Milano Cortina Games, an increase from 44 women (41.9%) in 2024, 37 (36.3%) women in 2021, and 23 (25%) women in 2016.
- Of the 204 active NOCs with a leadership team listed[7], 143 (70.1%) have all-male leadership teams, 55 (27%) have male/female leadership teams, and six — Aruba, Fiji, New Zealand, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela — have all-female leadership teams. This is a continued improvement from 2024 and 2021 when 73.2% and 77.6% of NOCs had all-male leadership teams.
- Women again remain underrepresented in voting positions on International Federation executive boards. Of the 95 board positions listed on IF websites, women hold only 25 (26.3%). Only the International Skating Union Council's and World Curling Federation's executive boards were above the 30% threshold.
- For the first time, the International Paralympic Committee reached gender parity, with six women serving on the 12-member Governing Board. This is an increase from 2024 and 2021, when women held 42.9% and 28.6% of the positions, respectively. Of the six women, three were Paralympians or elite para-athletes.
- Women remain underrepresented in National Paralympic Committees. Of the 173 presidential positions listed on NPC websites, women held 31 (17.9%), a decrease from previous years. Likewise, women held 46 (25.7%) of main contact positions.

Leadership Takeaway

The International Olympic Committee has made notable progress toward gender parity on its Executive Board, Members, and Commissions. Women held six (40%) board positions before the start of the 2026 Olympic Games. Kirsty Coventry was elected as the first female IOC President in 2025, ending over 100 years of male presidencies. Moreover, 44.3% of the



Kirsty Coventry, the first female President of the IOC, speaks during the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Closing Ceremony.

IOC members and 48.9% of IOC Commission members were women. However, challenges in gender equality persist, and the dominance of men in leadership positions is still evident in National Olympic Committees and International Federations.

The International Paralympic Committee reached gender parity for the first time, meeting the goal it set in 2017 for equality. While the IPC does not release data about the number of individuals in its organizations with disabilities, it is worth noting that three women and three men of the governing board members (50%) were either Paralympians or elite para-athletes. However, women remain severely underrepresented at the national level. Women occupy just 17.9% of NPC president positions and 25.7% of main contact roles, both which fall below the 50% target. More concerningly, the percentage of women in the presidential position declined from 2022 (20.3%) and 2024 (20.3%). See Appendix C for an explanation of NOC and NPC roles.

However, quantitative data provides only a partial picture. Adding women to boards and committees does not automatically signify progress toward equity and inclusion. Representation is insufficient if women lack the authority to shape organizational priorities and objectives (Adriaanse, J. & Schofield, 2013). Women, therefore, must hold positions with real influence to institute meaningful change.

Moreover, a focus on gender also may obfuscate the experiences of women with different intersecting identities, particularly women of color and women with disabilities. While it is outside the scope of this report to assess the race and disability status of sport leaders in the Olympic and Paralympic Movements, progress is clearly uneven. Other research has found that women with disabilities (Piggott & Matthews, 2024) and women of color (Gaston & Higson, 2023) are severely underrepresented in decision-making positions in the Olympic

7 At the time of data collection, the Congo NOC listed the secretary general position as "vacant" and was, therefore, not included as a leadership team.

and Paralympic Games. Such realities highlight the need for an intersectional approach beyond just numerical representation that recognizes the challenges faced by women across different social backgrounds. Put simply: numbers do not tell the whole story.

Summary of Findings: The International Olympic Committee

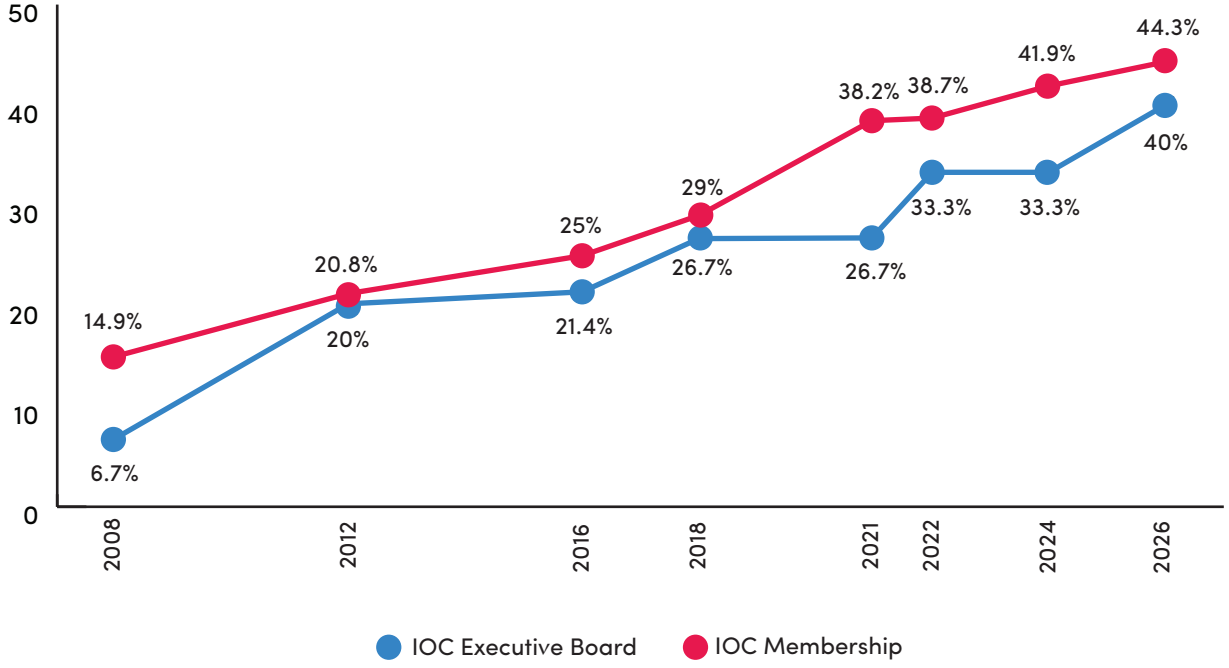
Founded in 1894 with 13 male members, the IOC has grown to its current composition. The IOC membership is capped at 115, including a maximum of 70 individual members, plus 15 athletes, 15 NOC presidents, and 15 IF presidents (Grasso et al., 2015). Under the Olympic Charter, IOC members are charged to "represent and promote the interests of the IOC and of the Olympic Movement" in their countries and/or Olympic organizations (IOC, 2024). The IOC is responsible for all aspects of the summer and winter Games, as well as for sustaining and fostering the Olympic Movement.

IOC members are elected for eight-year, renewable terms, with an age limit of 70, though members elected between 1966 and 1999 may serve until age 80. Notably, the absence of term limits allows individuals to retain membership for decades. As of January 2026, four IOC members have served since the 1980s and 11 since the 1990s. Moreover, three honorary members were elected in the 1970s and six in the 1980s. Honorary members are former Executive Board members who are 70 years or older and are permitted to attend IOC Sessions but not vote. The longevity of some members shows the enduring power of a relatively small group.

The Executive Board of the IOC consists of the president, four vice presidents, and 10 additional members. The president is elected for an initial eight-year term, with the option of a single four-year renewal. Until Coventry's historic election in 2025, the IOC had been led exclusively by male presidents. Other Executive Board members are elected in a secret ballot by the IOC Session for four-year terms. Members may serve two consecutive terms, then again after a minimum period of two years off the board. This rotation results in the same individuals cycling back on the board, possibly reinforcing gender inequality. For example, during the 2022 session, Juan Antonio Samaranch, son of the late former IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, was re-elected to the Executive Board after previously serving from 2012–16.

Within this context, the Executive Board was historically slow to include women, although it has come closer to parity in recent years. Pirjo Häggman (Finland) and Flor Isava-Fonseca (Venezuela) were added in 1981, and Isava-Fonseca was the first woman elected to the IOC Executive Board in 1990. Anita DeFrantz (United States) became the first female vice-president of the IOC in 1997, followed by Gunilla Lindberg (Sweden) in 2004, Nawal El Moutawakel in 2012 and again in 2024, and Nicole Hoevertsz (Aruba) in 2021. As of January 2026, there were six women (40%) on the board: Coventry (president, Zimbabwe), El Moutawakel (vice-president, Morocco), Mikaela Cojuangco Jaworski (member, Philippines), Li Lingwei (member, China), Emma Terho (member, Finland), and Kristin Kloster (member, Norway). For trends over time, see Figure 6.

Figure 6. Women's Representation on the IOC Executive Board and in IOC Membership, 2008–26



The IOC membership also has continued to make progress toward equality. In January 2026, there were 106 members of the IOC, of which 47 (44.3%) were women. This is an increase from 44 women (41.9%) in 2024, 37 (36.3%) women in 2021, and 23 (25%) women in 2016. However, only two (5.1%) of the 39 honorary members were women: Manuela di Centa (Italy) and Beatrice Allen (Gambia). For a breakdown of the gender representation within the IOC Executive Board and IOC membership, from 2016 to 2024, see Table B1 in Appendix B on page 54.

IOC Commissions

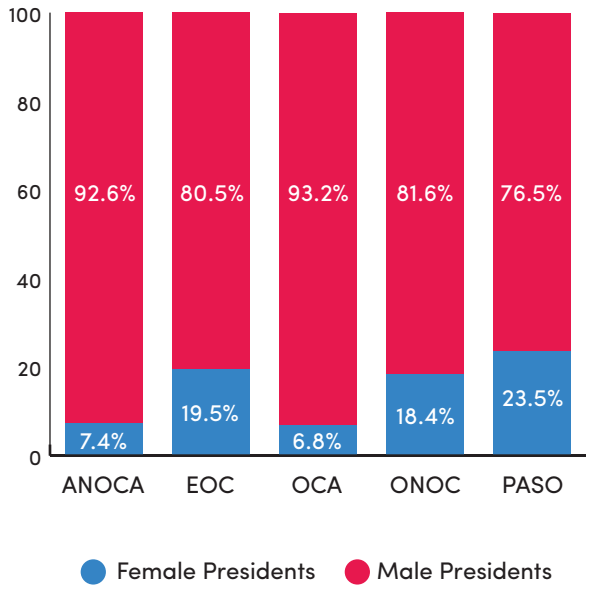
The IOC is a complex organization with numerous subcommittees and commissions. These groups run the major operations of the IOC and are composed of IOC members, representatives of upcoming Games, and outside experts. Former IOC President Thomas Bach has also explicitly made gender parity on IOC commissions a goal of his presidency. He, therefore, appointed an equal number of men and women to the positions starting in 2022. As of January 2026, the IOC's website listed 29 commissions or committees, five boards of directors, and one list of delegate members.

Of the 603 listed commission positions, women hold 295 (48.9%). This nears parity, though is a slight decrease from 49.5% in 2024, and a significant increase from 31.5% in 2016. Only four groups fall below the 30% threshold: the Coordination Commission for Los Angeles 2028; the Human Resources Committee Commission (though it should be noted that this committee lists only two men as members); the Olympic Channel – Board of Directors, Switzerland; and the Revenues and Commercial Partnerships Commission. Of the seven delegate members, IOC members appointed to represent the IOC in external relationships, five are men and two are women. Women chair 13 (38.2%) of the 34 commissions with listed chairs. For a complete breakdown of IOC Commission leadership, see Table B2 in Appendix B on page 55.

National Olympic Committees

There are currently 205 active and one suspended National Olympic Committees.[8] These are the groups that the IOC recognizes to organize Olympic teams in their respective countries. NOCs list two people on their websites as the leaders of the country's committee: the "president," who leads the organization; and the "secretary general," the primary administrative person. As of January 2026, 28 women (13.7%) and 177 men served as NOC presidents, an increase from 21 women (10.2%) in 2022 and 15 women (7.5%) in 2018. The number of women listed as secretaries general also increased, from 30 women (14.6%) in 2022 to 39 (19.1%) in 2026.[9] Table B3 in Appendix B on page 56 provides an overview by region of president and secretary general positions, from 2016 to 2024. Figure 7 compares the percentage of male and female presidents by region.

Figure 7. The Percentage of Female and Male National Olympic Committee Presidents, by Region



Despite the increase, women only held 67 (16.4%) of 409 listed NOC positions. The number of women in leadership positions within the NOCs, therefore, continues to be significantly below any of the targets outlined by the IOC. Table B4 in Appendix B on page 57 shows the gender breakdown of listed NOC positions by region, 2016 to 2026.

Moreover, of the 204 NOCs with a listed president and general secretary, 143 (70.1%) have all-male leadership teams, 55 (26.7%) have male/female leadership teams, and six–Aruba, Fiji, New Zealand, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela–have all-female leadership teams. This is a slight improvement from 2022 when 77.1% of NOCs had all-male leadership teams. For a breakdown of NOC leadership teams by region, see Table B5 in Appendix B on page 58.

While this report documents the underrepresentation of women as NOC presidents and secretaries general, other researchers have attempted to identify the reasons for their absence from leadership roles. Noh et al. (2026) found that the average share of women on NOC boards was 19.8% in the mid-2010s. Importantly, they found that countries with higher levels of democracy, transparency, and economic development correlated with a greater proportion of women on NOC boards. Taken together, the findings suggest that increasing the number of women in decision-making positions within NOCs is not just a matter of individual choice or recruitment, but is connected to the broader social, political, and economic contexts in which the organizations operate.

8 The IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee from the 2022 Olympic Winter Games.

9 The Congo did not list a Secretary General

International Federations

International sport federations (IFs) organize the various sports on the Olympic program and conduct world championships. There are currently seven IFs recognized by the Winter Olympic Federations (WOF). The top executive of an IF is typically called the president. As of January 2026, no woman served as president of a winter IF. The winter IFs also continue to largely fail to meet the baseline targets the IOC has established for itself. Of the 95 board positions listed on IF websites, women hold only 25 (26.3%). This is in line with summer IFs, as women held 27.8% of those board positions in 2024. Moreover, only two winter IF executive boards are above the IOC's previous 30% threshold. For a gender breakdown of the winter International Federation executive councils, 2016 to 2024, see Figure 8. Although the IOC does not give IFs directives in this subject matter, it would seem the IOC's emphasis on gender equality in governance structures has not filtered down to the International Federations.

Summary of Findings: The International Paralympic Committee

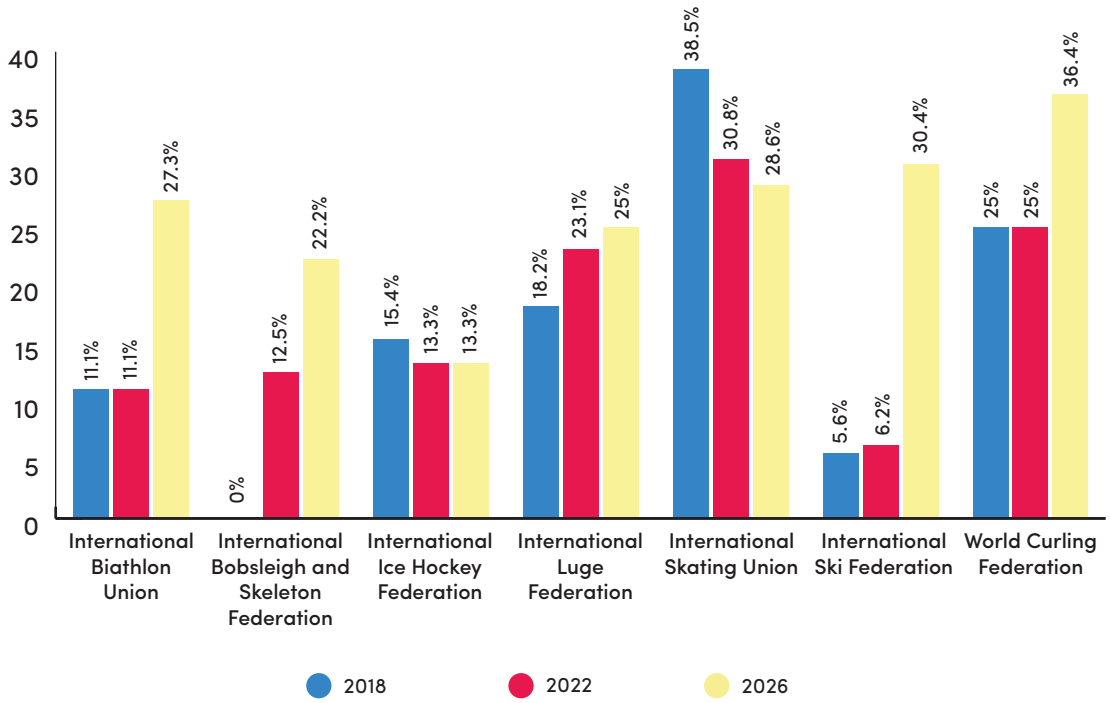
The International Paralympic Committee is the governing body of the Paralympic Movement and organizer of the Paralympic Games. Founded in 1989 and headquartered in Bonn, Germany, the IPC helps para athletes achieve athletic excellence. The IPC is composed of National Paralympic Committees, International Federations, International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled, and regional organizations.

The IPC Governing Board consists of 12 members: one president, two vice-presidents, seven members-at-large, and two members of the IPC Athletes' Council. Governing Board members are elected every four years and can serve a maximum of three consecutive terms. The IPC president is elected for a four-year term; Andrew Parsons, first elected in 2017, is in his third term. As of January 2026, the IPC has never had a woman president. Yet, for the first time, the IPC attained 50/50 parity, with six men and six women serving on the IPC Governing Board. This is an increase from 2022, when women held 42.8% of board positions.

Gender equity is also prevalent at the IPC Headquarters. The IPC Management Team includes the professional staff that works under the CEO, Mike Peters, organized by various responsibilities. Of the 131 positions listed for the IPC Management Team, women hold 84 (64.1%). There are also nine standing committees and sub-committees, three of which are chaired by women. Women hold 25 (44.6%) of the 56 listed positions, an increase from 41.2% in 2022. Table B6 in Appendix B on page 59 shows the gender distribution of members and chairs in the Paralympic governance structure. The IPC oversees one winter Paralympic Sport Federation, the World Para Ice Hockey Sport Committee.[10] Of the five people who serve on this committee, two are women (40%).

10 The IPC transferred governance of Para Alpine Skiing, Para Cross-Country Skiing, and Para Snowboard to the International Ski Federation. World Para Ice Hockey is governed by the IPC with assistance from the World Para Ice Hockey Technical Committee.

Figure 8. Women's Representation on Winter International Federation Executive Boards, 2018-26



Despite progress at the highest levels of the Paralympic Movement, these gains have not been reflected at the national level, particularly with the National Paralympic Committees. The IPC lists links to all the NPCs on its website. There are 181 active NPCs (compared to 205 active NOCs). The two leaders for each NPC are noted: one is the president and the other is called the "main contact," the primary contact person for the NPC, similar to the "secretary general" position of the NOCs. In several countries, one person serves as both the president and the main contact. There are 173 presidents listed, and 31 (17.9%) of them are women. In the main contact position, 179 people are listed, of whom 46 (25.7%) are women. This indicates a decrease in women in decision-making positions. For a complete breakdown of NPC Presidents, Main Contacts, and total positions, 2016 to 2026, see Table B7 in Appendix B on page 60. For a visualization of trends over time, 2016–26, see Figure 9.

United States Findings

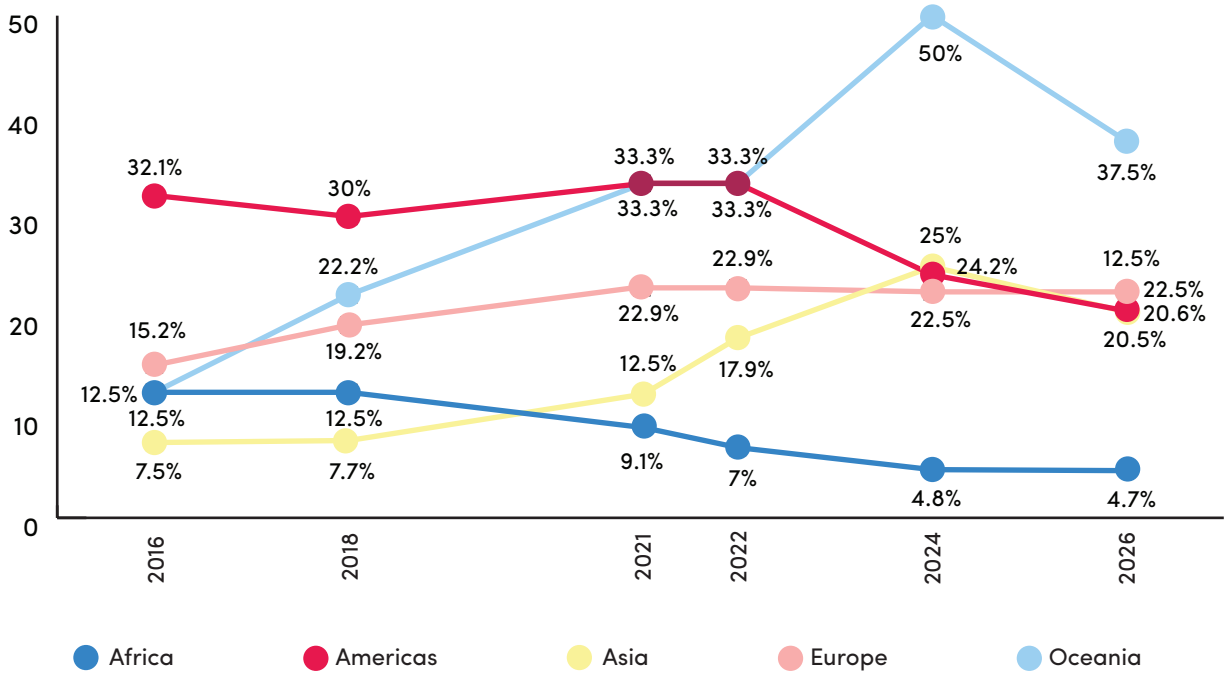
Summary of Major U.S. Findings:

- The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) achieved gender equality on most fronts. Of its five main governance committees, three had 50% or more female representation. Only the National Governing Bodies Council did not near parity. Women constituted 47.4% of the Board of Directors, 64.3% of the Team USA Athletes' Commission-USOPC Leadership Team, 50% of the Affiliate Organization Council, 20% of the NGBC, and 55.6% of the Paralympic Advisory Committee.
- The number of women on U.S. Winter Governing Bodies boards of directors or executive committees has increased, though has not reached a balanced 50/50 split across organizations. Women held 32% of board positions; no woman served as a chair. Moreover, four NGBs did not meet a 30% minimum threshold.
- Women continue to be woefully underrepresented as Olympic and Paralympic coaches.

Women in USOPC Leadership Positions

The USOPC was established as the American Olympic Association in 1921. Prior to this date, America's Olympic Movement was highly disorganized and characterized by political struggles between a number of groups, including the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The USOPC's mission is "[t]o empower Team USA athletes to achieve sustained competitive excellence and well-being." (United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee [USOPC], n.d.). Over the course of its existence, the USOPC has been led by a board of directors, with day-to-day operations led by a chief executive officer. The USOPC underwent a wholesale restructuring in 2003, and the board of directors was reduced from 125 members to

Figure 9. Women's Representation on NPC Leadership Teams, by Region, 2016-26



11 (Conrad, 2005). It underwent further restructuring in 2019. Perhaps most significantly, it changed its name to USOPC, adding "Paralympic" to better illustrate its purpose.

The composition of the Board of Directors is a chair, four U.S. members of the IOC, three members elected by the National Governing Bodies Council (NGBC), three Athletes' Advisory Council (AAC) athlete members, two at-large athlete members, five independent directors, and the CEO of the organization (non-voting).

The USOPC does not outline mandatory gender targets. Instead, it creates Demographic Data Reports to provide information on race, gender, and veteran and disability status. The reports are "designed for the USOPC and NGBs to easily identify opportunities to become more diverse and inclusive as it relates to athletes, coaches, staff, board of directors and membership" (USOPC, 2026).

Men have largely held the chair position of the USOPC. From February 2003 through June 2004, William Martin served as the acting chair. From summer 2004 until fall 2008, the board was chaired by Peter Ueberroth. Larry Probst next assumed the reins until he retired in 2019. Susanne Lyons was then unanimously elected and became the first female USOPC chair, holding the position until the end of 2022. When Sarah Hirshland became the USOPC CEO in 2018, it marked the first time the organization had women in both leadership positions. Gene Sykes is the current chair. As of January 2026, women were 47.4% of the Board of Directors, 64.3% of the Team USA Athletes' Commission-USOPC Leadership Team, 50% of the Affiliate Organization Council, 20% of the NGBC, and 55.6% of the Paralympic Advisory Committee (see Figure 10).

Women on U.S. National Governing Body and High-Performance Management Organization Board of Directors

Every International Federation has a parallel National Governing Body in each country. Nine NGBs oversee U.S. winter sports in the Olympic Games. The discrepancy between the number of IFs and U.S. NGBs is because some IFs are umbrella organizations for more than one sport that the United States separates into multiple NGBs. For example, the International Skating Union oversees figure skating and speed skating. In the United States, the responsibilities are split between U.S. Figure Skating and US Speedskating.

Each NGB has a board of directors or executive committee that helps lead the organization. Of the 153 positions, women held 49 (32%), a decline from 2022 when women attained 34%. No woman served as chair of a winter sport NGB. Four NGB leadership teams did not meet a 30% threshold: USA Curling (23.5%), USA Hockey (20.8%), USA Luge (16.7%), and USA Nordic (16.7%). For a complete overview of NGB representation, see Table B8 in Appendix B on page 61. For a visualization of trends over time, see Figure 11 on the following page.

Figure 10. Women's Representation in USOPC Leadership Positions, 2022 and 2026

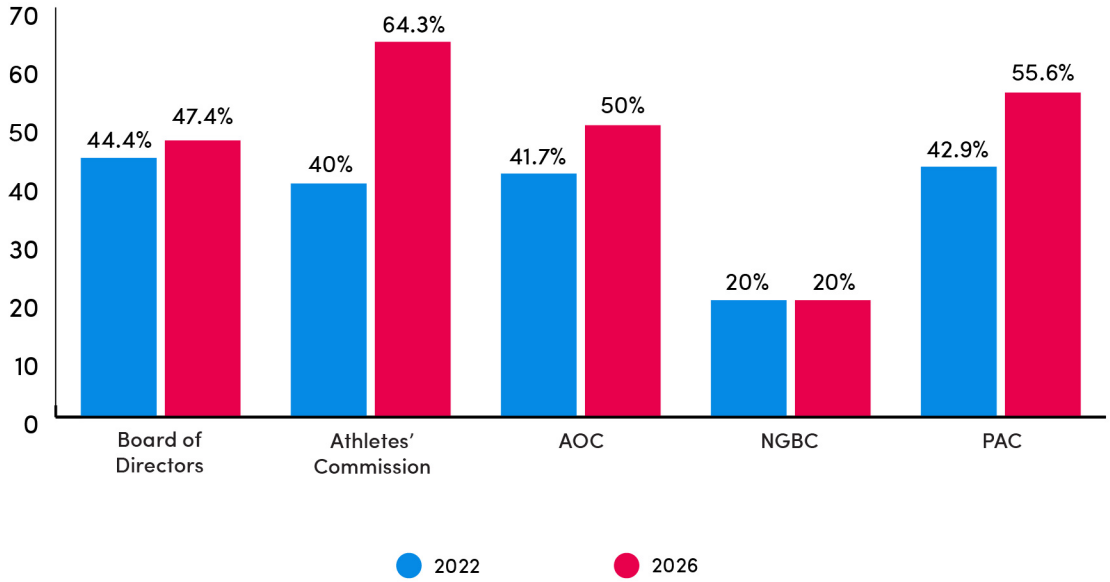
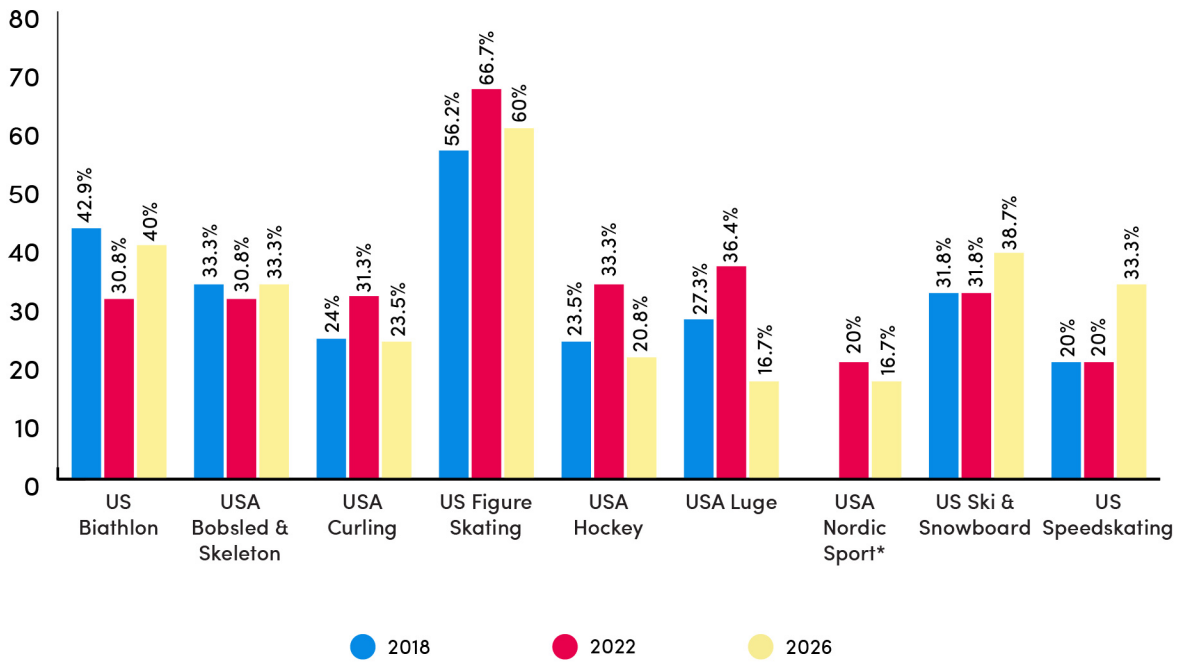


Figure 11. Women's Representation in U.S. NGB Executive Leadership, 2018-26



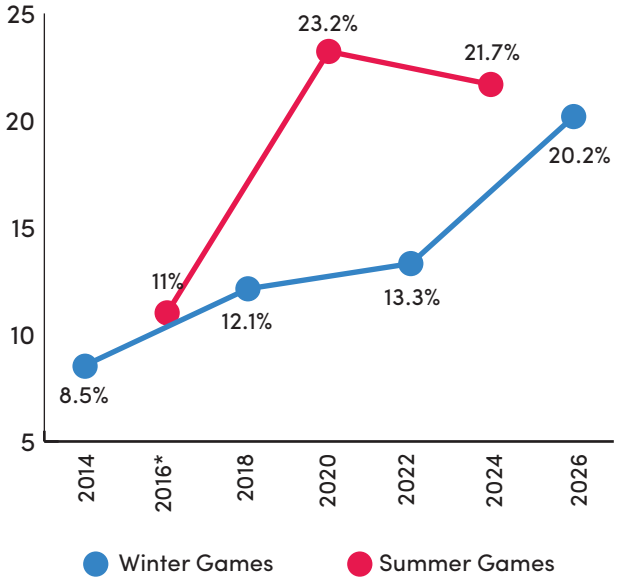
** 2018 data from US Nordic Sport not included*

Women in U.S. Coaching Positions

While strides have been made to increase female representation in leadership positions, women continue to be woefully underrepresented as Olympic and Paralympic coaches. This is due to widespread stereotypes that sport showcases masculine traits; women are, therefore, seen as less competent in all realms, including coaching (Kane & LaVoi, 2018). Moreover, as coaching women's sport became an increasingly profitable career after the passage of Title IX, more men assumed these positions, leaving women to be severely underrepresented. For example, in the 1970s, women coached more than 90% of women's college teams; in 2020, women coached approximately 42% of women's Division I college teams (Boucher et al., 2021). See Figure 12 for historical trends over time in U.S. summer and winter Olympic coaches.

Women held 21 (20.2%) of the "main coaching positions" at the 2026 Olympic Winter Games, an increase from 13.3% in 2022. Main positions are head coaches, assistant coaches, national teams' coaches, and position-specific coaches (such as start coaches, speed coaches, sprint coaches, and goaltending coaches). Although this report does not assess the gender breakdown of other key performance-related positions, such as wax technicians, equipment managers, and referees, women are largely underrepresented in these areas as well. While the number of women in main positions has increased over time,

Figure 12. Percentage of Women U.S. Olympic Coaches, 2014-26



** Data for 2016 Olympic Games is based on IOC report of accredited coaches and includes women coaches from all delegations.*

they remain excluded from preeminent positions. Notably, not a single woman served as a head coach of a U.S. Olympic team.[11] For a comparison of main coaches by sport, see Figure 13.

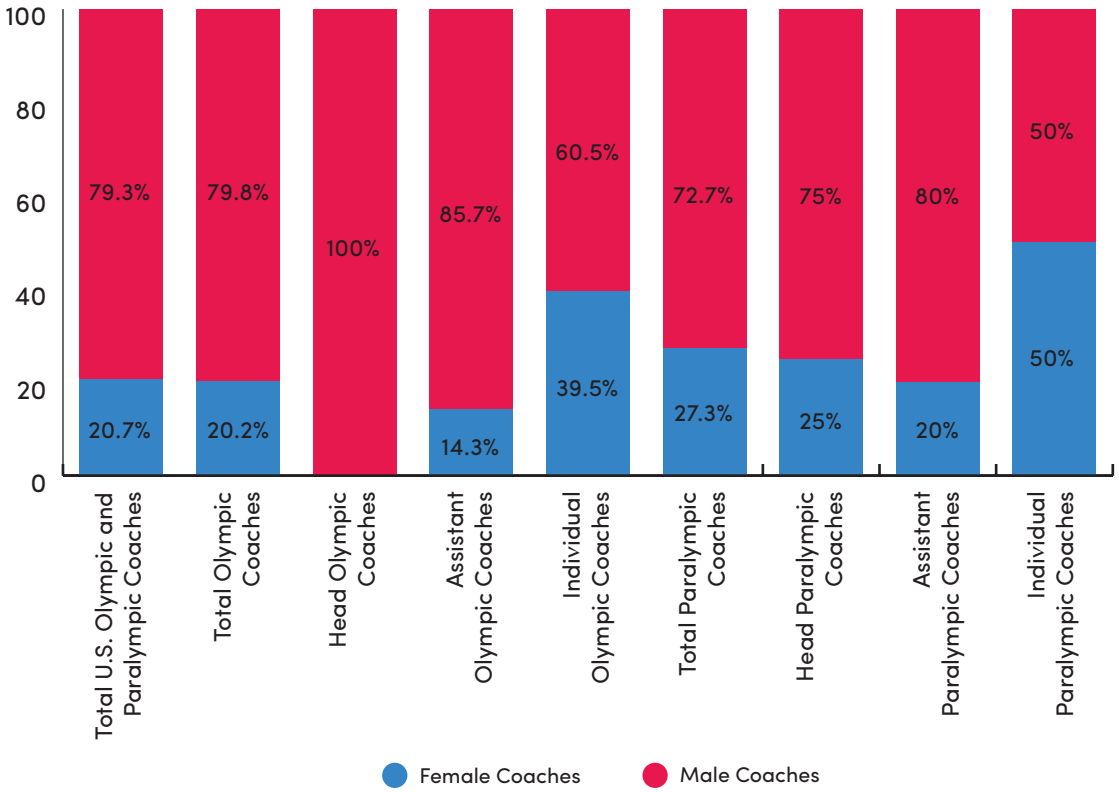
Men similarly dominated in U.S. Paralympic coaching at the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games, where women held just three (27.3%) of the 11 main coaching positions. Of the five Paralympic winter sports, men served as the head coach of three: para Alpine skiing, sled hockey, and para snowboard. BethAnn Chamberlain was the U.S. para Nordic skiing coach. Figure 13 provides an overview of Olympic and Paralympic head, assistant, and individual coaches by gender.

11 Karen Harjo's title is "Head Coach – Mikaela Shiffrin," but she was tabulated as an individual coach. Kristen Bourne is the World Cup coach in cross-country skiing, but because Matt Whitcomb is listed as the "head coach" of the sport, she was tabulated as an assistant. Similarly, Cathy Overton-Clapham, who coaches the women's curling team and mixed-doubles team, was listed in the individual category as there is no head coach of the three curling teams.



Cathy Overton-Clapham coached the 2026 U.S. Olympic women's curling team and mixed-doubles team.

Figure 13. The Percentage of Female and Male Olympic and Paralympic Coaches, by Position, 2026



Media Coverage of 2026 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games

The *IOC Gender Equality Review Project* (2024) Imagery Guidelines section included five areas of recommendations: using active, authentic, and respectful visual imagery; depicting athleticism and athletic prowess; giving equal exposure; capturing diversity; and balancing strength, power, and speed with gracefulness, agility, and elegance. In other words, depict female athletes as competent athletes in action across a variety of sports, while not focusing all the attention on a couple of athletes from one team. In addition, outlets should try to have diverse subjects in photos, considering age, race, gender, and sport. Furthermore, as Guerin and Naraine (2020) suggest, researchers should shift from newspaper coverage to other forms such as social media. Thus, this section has shifted from examining non-IOC-affiliated media outlets to official Instagram accounts of the Games, federations, and media rights holders. The brief literature review that follows discusses media coverage of Olympic and Paralympic athletes and leads to the current study.

In the most recent iteration of Angelini and McArthur's (2026) longitudinal study of primetime Olympic broadcast coverage, female athletes once again received more coverage than male athletes during the 2026 Olympic Winter Games (50.6% compared to 49.4%). The authors state that this is the sixth Games in a row in which female athletes have received more media coverage during the broadcast, dating back to the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio (Angelini & McArthur, 2026). Similar to the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, the percentage of coverage of men and women at Milano Cortina was close. Again, the authors argue that the reason women received more coverage in Milano Cortina is due to the number of American female athletes and teams who won gold medals, bringing home 17 medals across 14 events compared to the American men who won 12 medals in 12 events (Angelini & McArthur, 2026). This increased coverage reflects a divergence from prior sport media analyses that indicated that female athletes are much more likely to be underrepresented and trivialized in media coverage than male athletes (Adams & Tuggle, 2004; Cooky et al., 2013; Turner, 2014). Similarly, in terms of media coverage of Olympic athletes, Billings et al. (2008), Angelini and Billings (2010), and Tuggle et al. (2007) all found that men received most of the coverage time.

Some recent research has examined Olympic social media coverage via official broadcast rights holders and National Olympic Committee accounts, which is relevant to this report. In terms of broadcast rights holders, Johnson et al. (2022) examined Instagram posts from the two North American Olympic rights holders, CBC and NBC, of the 2016 and 2018 Olympic Games. The results showed few statistically significant gender differences in how male and female athletes were depicted by CBC and NBC (Johnson et al., 2022). In general, male and female athletes were depicted in similar amounts and not overrepresented in stereotypic ways, e.g., women in aesthetic sports or men in strength sports. The Johnson et al. (2022) study was based on Romney and Johnson's (2020) study of four American sports networks' Instagram accounts: ESPN, FOX Sports, CBS Sports, as well as NBC, the broadcast rights holder for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The results indicated that male athletes received a disproportionate number of posts across the accounts. For example, 85% of the images were of male athletes. In addition, 80% of images of male athletes depicted them as active, compared to 60% of posts of female athletes (Romney & Johnson, 2020). Furthermore, pictures of female athletes were much more likely to be shown away from the field of play (53.8%) compared to similar pictures of male athletes (25.9%). This is consistent with historical research that men are more likely to be depicted as competent athletes (on the ice/course, in action), whereas female athletes are more likely to be trivialized (off the ice/course, out of uniform, not as competent athletes).

On National Olympic Committee (NOC) Instagram accounts, Grabmüllerová's (2022) study indicated that female and male athletes were being depicted fairly. The researcher examined accounts from three NOCs (Norway, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland) during the 2020 Olympic Games. Each country had more male athletes than female athletes during the Games. The results indicated that the content posted to those Instagram accounts reflected participation numbers for the country and success of the athletes. For example, even though 44% of the Swiss athlete delegation was female, they won 10 of the country's 13 medals and received 60% of the Instagram coverage. In comparison, female athletes from Norway and Sweden received coverage relative to their participation rates (35% and 36%). The study did not assess the type of coverage, just the quantity. Another study of NOC accounts by Einsle et al. (2025) examined Facebook and Instagram posts of five countries: Portugal, Spain, Brazil, Mexico, and Colombia. They found that, across those NOCs' social media accounts, 47.1% of posts focused on men, 37.2% of posts focused on women, and 21.0% included both men and women. Some NOCs had more equal representation of men and women, including Spain and Brazil, while Portugal had more posts about men (59.5%) than women. In comparison, Castro-Lemus et al. (2026) examined Instagram posts from three major Spanish websites during the 2024 Olympic Games. They found that only 31% of the Instagram posts were about women's sports, despite these Games being touted as the "gender-equal Olympics" (Castro-Lemus et al., 2026). That percentage was boosted by the fact that one of the websites (La Tarjeta Morada) exclusively covers women's sports, so 100% of their posts were about female athletes.

Comparatively, there has been a relative lack of media coverage and analysis of media coverage of Paralympic athletes. A meta-analysis conducted by Rees et al. (2019) found a limited number of studies to examine (n=17). The results of the meta-analysis indicated that athletes with disabilities are underrepresented in media coverage, female athletes with disabilities received less media coverage than their male counterparts, and media coverage depicted domestic athletes with specific types of disabilities, and the "supercrip" depiction (Paralympian as superhuman) was prevalent (Rees et al., 2019). In terms of NBC, the official media rights holder, Weiller-Abels et al. (2021) analyzed 46 hours of NBC broadcast coverage of the 2018 Paralympic Games in PyeongChang. Since the sports

were similar, they ended up comparing the coverage of men's and women's Alpine skiing. Results indicated that athletes were framed in ways that depicted stereotypes related to (dis)ability and gender. For example, athletes were depicted as overcoming disability and positioned as "inferior" to able-bodied athletes (Weiller-Abels et al., 2021). In addition, NBC coverage reinforced stereotypes about male and female athletes. For example, announcers described female athletes using terms like "grace and beauty" more frequently compared to describing male athletes as "powerful."

A recent study by Page et al. (2024) out of Australia examined both print and broadcast coverage of the 2020 Paralympic Games. The authors found that while Paralympians were, in many instances, presented as "athletes first," outlets continued to describe them in ways that reinforced stereotypes. This included: patronizing language, rendering their disability as invisible, and an emphasis that athletes should be grateful for the opportunity to compete. Kolotouchkina et al. (2020) analyzed media coverage of Paralympic Games on the national Spanish Broadcaster, RYVE, during the Sochi 2014, Rio 2016, and PyeongChang 2018 Games. The results indicated a decrease in broadcast time (16 minutes in 2014, ~13 minutes in 2016, and ~4 minutes in 2018). In addition, there were gender differences in terms of the amount of coverage. The outlets dedicated 18.8% of their stories to female athletes (six out of 32) (Kolotouchkina et al., 2020).

Solves et al. (2018) also examined how the six highest-circulation Spanish newspapers and six largest Spanish sports media outlets framed Paralympians during the 2008 and 2012 Paralympic Games. The results indicated that the sports newspaper *Marca* was solely responsible for the overall increase in media coverage between the 2008 and 2012 Games. The other general outlets varied, with some reducing their coverage from Beijing to London by 20% (*El País)* to 40% (*El Mundo*), while others increased their coverage by more than 90% (ABC and *La Razón*). The only sport-specific newspaper, however, to increase its coverage of the Paralympic Games from 2008 to 2012 was *Marca*, while three others reduced coverage by 40-50% (Solves et al., 2018). Kim et al. (2017) also found a lack of media coverage of the 2012 Paralympic Games, with U.S. outlets producing 758 broadcasts related to the Olympic Games and only 28 broadcasts of the Paralympic Games. Researchers found that when media outlets covered the Paralympic Games, they often reinforced the "supercrip," Paralympian as superhuman, narrative (Kim et al., 2018). This is consistent with prior research that found a general lack of media coverage, that male athletes have received more coverage than female athletes (Buysse & Borcherding, 2010; Schantz & Gilbert, 2001), and that media coverage has tended to objectify Paralympians (Beacom et al., 2016; Silva & Howe, 2012).



Brenna Huckaby became the most decorated U.S. Paralympic snowboarder with her bronze medal in the banked slalom.

Social Media Coverage of 2026 Olympic Winter Games

This section examined online media coverage of Milano Cortina 2026. As in the Paris 2024 report, the analysis examined official social media accounts of governing bodies affiliated with the Games. These accounts were chosen so that researchers could assess how the governing bodies worked towards the goals related to gender equity and athlete portrayals outlined in the *IOC Gender Equality Review Project* (IOC, 2024). Again, this shift to official media accounts is an attempt to align the media coverage section more closely to the athlete and leadership sections of the report, which collect data from official governing bodies. Therefore, pictures posted to the main feeds of the following social media accounts were collected and examined: @MilanoCortina2026, @Olympics, @NBCOlympics, and @TeamUSA. These are the official governing body, the official Games accounts, and the official media rights holder for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the United States (NBC). Due to the time difference, data were collected once per day during the Games from February 5 through February 23, 2026, to ensure the most accurate compilation of images. Data collected resulted in 3,160 images. Excluding those images for which the gender of the athlete(s) was unclear resulted in 2,809 images. The analysis utilized Johnson and colleagues' (2022) methodology to analyze the data into the following categories:

- **Account name:** @MilanoCortina2026, @Olympics, @NBCOlympics, @TeamUSA, @NBCOlympics
- **Nature of the sport (strength, neutral, or aesthetic)[12]:** strength (ice hockey), neutral (Alpine skiing, bobsleigh, curling), and aesthetic (figure skating, freestyle skiing, snowboard half pipe)
- **Gender of athlete[13]:** female, male, transgender, or non-binary[14]
- **Photo type (active, passive, metacommunicative, podium, or celebratory):** active (participating in their sport or activity, not staged), passive (opening/closing ceremony, medal photoshoots or staged images on field), podium (on podium), metacommunicative (images with text overlay like a promotional ad for an event or post celebrating winning a medal), and celebratory (athletes hugging, yelling, crying, walking around with flag following victory or performance)

The podium category was added to photo type because numerous images of athletes on the podium emerged, and counting those as passive photos did not provide enough nuance to the analysis. This section includes descriptive statistics and results from the chi-square analysis, which examines the relationship between two things. In this report, a chi-square analysis was run to determine if there were gender differences in portrayals (e.g., gender and image type). The analysis included only images of male and female athletes independently. The analysis excluded images of both male and female athletes together and pictures in which gender, sport nature, or team vs. individual sports couldn't be determined, resulting in a total of 2,293 images analyzed.

In terms of social media accounts, @TeamUSA accounted for 57.2% of 2,293 images posted to main feeds in which gender could be determined, @Olympics, 31.1%; @NBCOlympics, 7.9%; and @MilanoCortina, 3.8%. Overall, there was a higher percentage of pictures of female athletes (55.5%) than of male athletes (44.5%). The five sports depicted most frequently were: ice hockey (20%), freestyle skiing (14.3%), Alpine skiing (10.2%), figure skating (10.8%), and speed skating (9.7%).

In terms of gender and social media accounts, there were more pictures of female athletes than male athletes. See Table 17. The chi-square analysis, however, indicated no statistically significant relationship between gender and social media account $X^2(df=3) = 2.927$, $p < .403$.

Table 17. Account and Gender of Athletes in Images

Account	Images of Female Athletes	Images of Male Athletes
@MilanoCortina2026	51	37
@Olympics	402	310
@NBCOlympics	90	91
@TeamUSA	729	583
Totals	**1,272**	**1,021**
Percentage	**55.5%**	**44.5%**

In terms of gender and the image type, male athletes were depicted as active more often than female athletes. Female athletes were much more likely to be in the metacommunicative category. See Table 18 below. The chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between gender and image type, $X^2(df=4) = 25.720$, $p < .001$. In other words, female athletes were less likely to be depicted as active (adj. res. = -3.4), compared to male athletes (adj. res. = 3.4). In addition, female athletes were observed more than expected (adj. res. = 4.7) in the metacommunicative category compared to male athletes (adj. res. = -4.7).

12 While aesthetic sports include some strength elements, officials score performance based on a set of criteria, unlike other sports in which the outcome is determined by more objective criteria such as goals, time, or distance.

13 Researchers acknowledge that the category of gender alone may create an incomplete analysis, as many factors contribute to access to Olympic and Paralympic sports, which then impacts who is and is not portrayed in social media coverage.

14 Gender was determined by the sport event the athlete participated in, as categorized by the Olympic and Paralympic Games (e.g., women's snowboard half pipe or men's Alpine skiing), which is often in the description on the social media post.

Table 18. Gender and Image Type

Image Type	Images of Female Athletes	Images of Male Athletes
Active	306	310
Passive	135	118
Metacommunicative	524	323
Podium	91	66
Celebratory	216	204
Totals	**1,272**	**1,021**

In terms of gender and the sport nature posted across all four accounts, there were more pictures of female athletes in strength sports than male athletes (see Table 19). The chi-square analysis, however, indicated no statistically significant relationship between gender and nature of the sport, $X^2(df=2) = 1.075$, $p<.584$.

Table 19. Gender and Nature of Sport

Nature of Sport	Images of Female Athletes	Images of Male Athletes
Neutral	609	467
Strength	255	216
Aesthetic	408	338
Totals	**1,272**	**1,021**

Finally, the chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between gender and whether the athlete participated in an individual or team sport, $X^2(df=1) = 10.739$, $p<.001$. In other words, female athletes who participated in individual sports were more likely to be observed (adj. res. = 3.3) than male athletes in individual sports (adj. res. = -3.3). The reverse is also true: male athletes in team sports were more likely to be observed than female athletes in team sports.

As far as the IOC gender equity and media coverage, the results indicate a shift in coverage. Across all four accounts, there were more pictures of female athletes (55.5%) compared to male athletes (45%). Across the accounts, @TeamUSA had almost twice as many posts as the @Olympics account. @NBCOlympics seemed to focus more on video clips of the athletes during their events. @MilanoCortina2026, for unclear reasons, did not post frequently in general.

In terms of the type of coverage, women were less likely to be depicted as active and more likely to be featured in metacommunicative posts, compared to male athletes. The metacommunicative posts often celebrated the medal-winning accomplishments (17 medals, including eight gold medals for American women) of female athletes, which one would argue could be as impactful as seeing them in active pictures. The other statistically significant category of team vs. individual sport is interesting considering the history of gender typing sports, deeming certain sports like figure skating and gymnastics more feminine than team sports like ice hockey. In sports like freestyle skiing, big air, and halfpipe snowboarding, while aesthetic and individual, women's equipment and uniforms are basically the same as men's, loose fitting jackets and pants, compared to the form-fitting uniforms as the other sports. Those are obviously outdoors during the cold weather as well. Again, the American women in those individual sports, plus Alpine skiing, were very successful, which also could contribute to why they were more likely to be featured in social media posts.

Social Media Coverage of the 2026 Paralympic Winter Games

This section examined photos posted to the following Instagram accounts' main feeds: @MilanoCortina2026, @Paralympics, @NBCOlympics, @TeamUSA. These are the official Paralympic governing body accounts and the official media rights holder for the Games in the United States (NBC). Data was collected once per day during the Games from March 5 to March 23, 2026. The number of photographs dedicated to male athletes, female athletes, and both were counted for each source, totaling 1,055. The analysis of the Paralympic images followed the Johnson et al. (2022) methodology, except for the "nature of the sport" category, as there were no sports considered aesthetic in the Paralympic Winter Games, so sports were coded as strength or neutral. For context, 611 total athletes competed: 160 women and 451 men, 26.5% female and 72.5% male. This section includes descriptive statistics and results from the chi-square analysis. A chi-square analysis was run to determine if there were gender differences in portrayals. The analysis included only images in which athletes were coded as male or female. In addition, images coded in any other category (such as "can't tell") were excluded, which resulted in 844 images for analysis.

An overview of the data indicates that the @TeamUSA account far outpaced the other social media accounts in terms of quantity of images (70.4%), followed by @Paralympics (19.1%), @MilanoCortina2026 (6.3%), and @NBCOlympics (4.3%). Cross-country skiing/biathlon[15] had the highest percentage of images (38.7%), followed by para Alpine skiing (22.2%), sled hockey (19.9%), para snowboard (13.8%), and finally wheelchair curling (5.4%).

In terms of overall percentage of male vs. female images, male athletes were featured 56.3% of the time, compared to female athletes at 43.7%. See Table 20. The chi-square analysis, however, indicated there was no statistically significant relationship between gender and social media account $X^2(df=3) = 7.309$, $p<.063$. This means that it was not more or less likely to feature one sex over the other.

15 Cross-country skiing and biathlon were combined into one category because many Paralympic athletes competed in both events.

Table 20. Account and Gender of Athletes in Images

Account	Images of Female Athletes	Images of Male Athletes
@MilanoCortina2026	14	39
@Paralympics	71	90
@NBCOlympics	18	18
@TeamUSA	266	328
Totals	**369**	**475**
Percentage	**43.7%**	**56.3%**

In terms of gender and image type, the chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between gender and image type, $X^2(df=4) = 19.159$ $p<.001$. In other words, female athletes were more likely to be depicted as passive (adj. res. = -2.8) than male athletes (adj. res. = 2.8). In addition, female athletes were observed more than expected (adj. res. = 3.0) in the podium category, compared to male athletes (adj. res. = -3.0). See Table 21.

Table 21. Gender and Image Type

Image Type	Images of Female Athletes	Images of Male Athletes
Active	102	130
Passive	40	84
Metacommunicative	134	149
Podium	51	36
Celebratory	42	76
Totals	**369**	**475**

In terms of gender and sport nature, male athletes in strength sports were more likely to be observed than their female counterparts. In addition, female athletes in neutral sports were much more likely to be observed than their male counterparts. See Table 22. The chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between gender and nature of the sport, $X^2(df=1) = 135.178$ $p<.001$. In other words, female athletes in strength sports were less likely to be pictured (adj. res. = -11.6) than male athletes in strength sports (adj. res. = 11.8). The caveat here is that the only strength sport in the Paralympic Winter Games is sled hockey, which is technically a mixed event. Yet only two teams had a female representative, Japan with Akari Fukunishi, who was on the roster; and Slovakia with Michaela Hozakova, who was a reserve player for the tournament.

Table 22. Gender and Nature of Sport

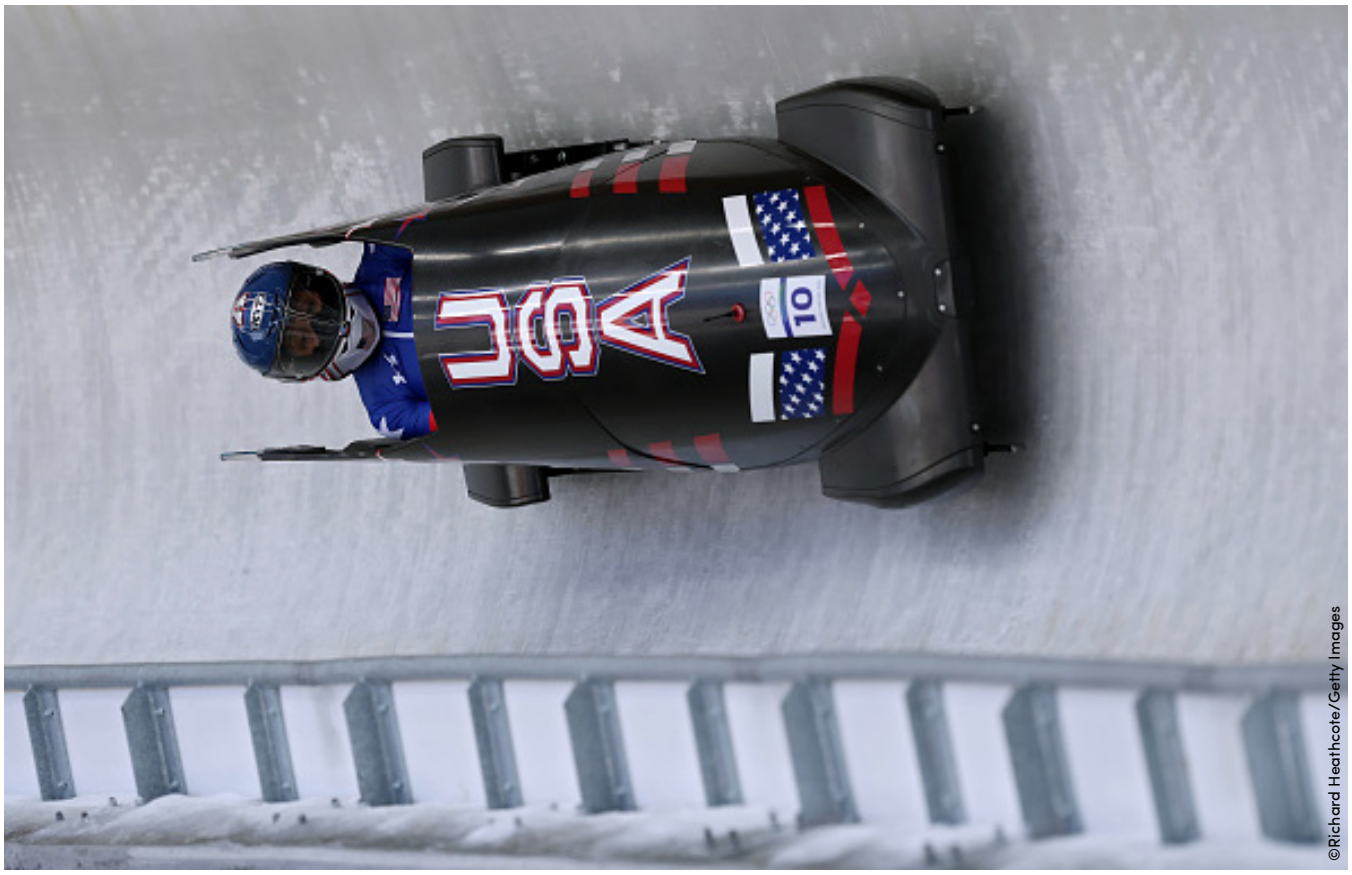
Nature of Sport	Images of Female Athletes	Images of Male Athletes
Neutral	365	320
Strength	4	155
Totals	**369**	**475**

Media Conclusions

This was the most-streamed NBC Winter Paralympic Games, with five times as many minutes streamed as Beijing 2022. Viewership was also four times higher than all other Winter Paralympic digital viewership combined (International Paralympic Committee, 2026b). As stated previously, in terms of post distribution across accounts, the @NBCOlympics Instagram account focuses more on video clips of winning moments than static images in the main feed. Thus, it may be of interest to utilize a different official Games social media account to help provide further context to the types of posts and expand the pool of images to include a more global analysis of social media. As in the media analysis of the 2026 Olympic Winter Games, @TeamUSA posted more than any other account analyzed. The Paralympic data also indicated that, although women were 23% of Paralympic participants, they were featured in 43.7% of the images, which is a positive shift in the quantity of images. In addition, female Paralympic athletes were more likely to be pictured on the podium than male athletes. This is in part due to the success of Oksana Masters, Kendall Gretsch, Kate Delson, Brenna Huckaby, and other women on Team USA who were prominently featured on that account. Finally, female Paralympic athletes also were more likely to be depicted in passive images than their male counterparts. However, they were more likely to be pictured on the podium than male Paralympians. In sum, work is still needed to depict female Paralympians as active participants in their sports without erasing their disabilities.

Looking Ahead

The 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games made one point unmistakably clear: women's sport flourishes when policy, access, and visibility are aligned. Across events, women delivered the depth, competitiveness, and defining moments of the Games. Yet these achievements exist alongside persistent structural inequities, particularly in leadership and governance, where women remain underrepresented. Nowhere is this more visible than in coaching, where women's continued underrepresentation reinforces men's dominance in one of the most public-facing leadership positions at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This disconnect creates an urgent mandate for sport organizations to institutionalize transparency and expand leadership pathways, and for media to sustain meaningful coverage beyond the Olympic spotlight.



©Richard Heathcote/Getty Images

Elana Meyers Taylor won a gold medal in the women's monobob to reach six career Olympic medals, tying her with speedskater Bonnie Blair for the most career Winter Olympic medals by an American woman.

Women in Milan did more than participate — they set the standard. Their events anchored prime-time viewing and digital media, and showcased deep, globally diverse fields in which multiple athletes contended for gold, illustrating how investment expands both access and competitive excellence beyond traditional powerhouses. At the same time, female athletes continued to redefine the boundaries of sport, using their platforms to address a range of issues. High-profile narratives reinforced this shift: Lindsey Vonn's return to downhill reframed resilience as strategy rather than sacrifice; Elana Meyers Taylor's long-awaited gold medal highlighted sustained elite performance over time, challenging assumptions about the limits of women's athletic careers; and Italy's overall efforts to retain women in elite sport produced historic results. Mixed-gender team events further demonstrated how collaboration elevates leadership, communication, visibility, and collective excellence. These mixed-gender team events do not add more women, though they allow women to compete in additional events. With the elimination of Nordic combined in 2030 and the addition of freeride skiing, women will continue to come closer to 50% of Winter Games participants, though still short as long as there are more men's ice hockey teams and four-man bobsleigh remains open only to men.

The legacy of Milan, then, is not about proving the value of women's sport; it is about meeting its demands. Continued progress will depend on sustained investment, consistent media representation, and intentional cultivation of women leaders. With the 2028 Olympic Games on the horizon, questions of equity will again take center stage.

Beyond the issues identified in this report, the reemergence of gender-verification policies raises questions about the capacity of sport organizations to achieve meaningful gender equality. The IOC and IPC will require women to undergo genetic testing for the SRY gene as a condition of eligibility for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Yet, the scientific and ethical implications of the procedure remain the subject of debate. Andrew Sinclair, whose research team first identified the SRY gene, has criticized the policy, arguing that the gene neither determines athletic ability nor serves as an adequate proxy for sex (Sinclair, 2025). Critics suggest the policy lacks scientific merit and serves as a mechanism to exclude specific athletes who do not conform to conventional ideas about sex and gender. The policy excludes transgender women and certain women with differences of sex development (DSD), creating new barriers to participation under the guise of fairness. Furthermore, regardless of intent, the result heightens scrutiny on all women athletes.

The next chapter will be defined not by inspiration, but by whether institutions act on what Milan made impossible to ignore.

Policy Recommendations

The Olympic and Paralympic movements aspire to embody the values of excellence and international harmony. This synergy can be showcased, or disrupted, in athletic performance at the summer and winter competitions. The Olympic and Paralympic competitions have played an important role in featuring women's excellence in sport at a global level. Historically, the well-known benefits of sport have not been equally afforded to women, people with disabilities, people from racially marginalized communities, and economically disadvantaged athletes, including in the Global South. The Olympic and Paralympic movements have a powerful part to play in the development of women athletes, coaches, officials, and leaders.

As this report shows, significant progress has been made in achieving gender equity across the Olympic and Paralympic movements. The analysis provided in this report points to important milestones and structural changes. At the same time, there are challenges, perhaps less obvious, that threaten to increase sexism and harm to women. The following policy recommendations suggest paths to maintain the progress made and to improve the experience of women athletes, coaches, officials, and spectators. They also identify several areas of concern that policymakers should proactively address, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), climate change, and regulations around sex testing. Progress remains uneven among women athletes and lags among women with disabilities, from racially marginalized communities, and in the Global South.

Overcoming historical inequity demands cooperation at every level of governance to provide safe environments, funding and resources, and equal opportunities. Organizations that operate with multi-level governance bodies and across national and continental borders present challenges to reform. The IOC and IPC, the IFs, NOCs, and NPCs have distinct stakeholders and mandates. Too often, these structural differences are used to stymie change and shift responsibility. Although some of the following recommendations are targeted toward a specific level of governance, it is essential that there is collective accountability, transparency, and cooperation. Justifications for gradual progress should be questioned. This is most dire in the Paralympic movement, across the board.

To effectively implement policies and projects related to inclusion requires three operational commitments: 1) every initiative needs a clear timeline and transparent method to evaluate progress, 2) every level of the Olympic and Paralympic movements must work in cooperation, with repercussions for non-compliance and incentives for progress, and 3) athletes should have representation in designing policy implementation and evaluation. Where organizations are unable or unwilling to adopt initiatives, external partner organizations may be helpful in evaluating progress. While the IOC has forged many corporate partnerships, it would be advisable to create partnerships with independent NGOs regarding major policy change.

The global sports communities and the Olympic and Paralympic movements face three significant threats to the integrity of sport. First, the proliferation of AI poses a challenge to athlete safety and the inclusivity of sports tournaments. The environmental impact of AI poses a significant risk to the sustainability of the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The snow and ice, which the Games depend on, are already being artificially produced with a high environmental impact. Second, the proliferation of the global betting industry has led to increased abuse of athletes. This abuse is worse for women and amplified for women from marginalized communities. Finally, the implementation of sex verification testing could threaten the inclusivity and economic viability of women's programs.

The following recommendations are related to one another and not listed in order of importance:

Recommendation #1: Achieve gender equity in participation at the Olympic and Paralympic Games

- The IOC and IPC should only approve Olympic and Paralympic Games programs that guarantee gender parity in participation. In July 2026, the IOC announced that the Alpes 2030 tournament would be the first Winter Games with guaranteed gender parity (IOC, 2026b). This is an achievement that reflects important progress. The announcement of the Alpes 2030 program coincided with the elimination of the Nordic combined event, which was interpreted by some as part of achieving representational equality. Going forward, the IOC and IPC should be mindful to avoid pitting men's and women's sports against one another to achieve equity, or the appearance of having done so.
- In the 2026 Paralympic Games, women represented just over a quarter of the participants (453 male athletes, compared to 163 women). This report shows para ice hockey with an extremely low number of women participants. A particularly striking line in the report states, "There is no sport in the Paralympic Winter Games that approaches equity for female athletes." The report applauds the continued progress toward equity, with women constituting a record 26.5%, up from 24% in 2022. There is no clear justification for why progress has been so slow.

- U.S. Paralympians composed around 11% of athletes. The representation of women was slightly better than the overall average, at 29%. The United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) should make every effort to achieve gender equity going forward. The USOPC bylaws state that athletes must be given "equal opportunity to participate without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, or national origin." Given the report's findings, it should be a priority for the USOPC to support greater participation of women Paralympians and coaches.
- All benchmarks of gender equity should account for the multi-faceted challenges that women athletes can face as part of the BIPOC, disabled, and LGBTQIA+ communities. To create goals, more data is needed to adequately evaluate the state of women's inclusion in the Olympic and Paralympic movements.

Recommendation #2: Increase women's leadership at all levels of governance

- The above report acknowledges the advances made in women's leadership at the IOC, IPC, IF, NOC, and NPC levels. The election of the first woman IOC president, Kirsty Coventry, in 2025, marked a milestone in governance. Additionally, six women (40%) served on the 15-member IOC Executive Board. The report also highlights the first parity achieved in the IPC board, with six women serving on the 12-member Governing Board. The extent to which increases in women's representation translate into better policies and treatment of women athletes needs further study and evaluation. Women of color, particularly from the Global South, remain underrepresented in governance, especially at the IPC, IF, NOC, and NPC levels.
- The report highlights a particular deficit of women's leadership in international federations. Across IFs, men continue to occupy most of the leadership roles, holding 74.7% of voting positions on executive boards. A male president led every IF in the Milano Cortina Winter Games. Of the 205 active NOCs, 177, or 86%, are presided over by men, as are 82% of NPCs. The IOC and IPC should work with IFs to encourage gender parity in leadership positions. Quotas should be implemented with an eye toward representation of women in meaningful positions. There are plenty of qualified women working within these organizations. Yet, according to the IOC's *Olympic Solidarity and NOC Services Report 2025*, of the 38 newly elected NOC presidents, only six were women. This implies a stagnation, or even rollback, of women's representation.
- There are a number of models for encouraging fairness in hiring and electoral processes that could provide inspiration. One example is the "Rooney Rule," used by professional leagues including the National Football League (NFL, 2026). The rule stipulates that at least two women and/ or BIPOC candidates are interviewed when seeking to fill positions such as general manager, head coach, and other executive titles. Furthermore, there are incentives for teams that successfully hire women and/or BIPOC candidates as executives or head coaches. In the NFL, teams that do so are awarded a compensatory draft pick. Other sports leagues have implemented programs whereby candidates receive mentorship and training to prepare for the move into executive leadership. In the case of elected officials, many models exist to create parity. Countries from around the world, including Colombia and Kenya, have adopted quota systems for candidates. While implementation is always difficult, quota systems have been shown to work.
- The Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Commission should be elevated beyond an advisory role and given a budget line and a mandate to work with IFs, NOCs, and NPCs to cultivate women in leadership and coaching. The Commission should be given authority to create incentives or allocate Olympic Solidarity funds, as well as authority to recommend disciplinary measures for non-compliance with goals of gender parity. Despite having admirable diversity plans, many NOCs and NPCs continue to have very little diversity in leadership. For example, there has not been an Asian, Black, or Latina woman as president of U.S. Figure Skating or U.S. Ski and Snowboard.



Veronika Aigner of Team Austria competes during the para Alpine skiing women's slalom vision impaired, one of four events she won in the 2026 Games.

Recommendation #3: Promote more women to head coaching and officiating positions

- A serious gap in the numbers of men and women in head coaching positions persisted in the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Coaches and officials are experts in their disciplines. They strategize, assess talent, and interpret rules. Because of long-standing stereotypes that portray women as subservient, emotional, and less intelligent than men, women were long considered unfit to work as referees, judges, and coaches. Women in coaching positions are often held to different standards than their male counterparts. They face criticism stemming from enduring stereotypes, such as expectations that women should be maternal and nurturing.
- Despite a wealth of talented women in coaching, there is a bottleneck at the top level. The difficulty in obtaining data from IFs, NOCs, and NPCs compromises data gathering. In the United States, only 20% of Olympic and Paralympic head coaching positions are held by women. Internationally, the numbers are often worse. The Canadian Olympic Committee, which is among the few that list head coaches on their websites, appointed just one woman out of 14 head coaches (7%). Actions to address the gender gap in coaching can and should be taken immediately.
- The IOC established a program to address gender inequality in coaching. The Women in Sport High-Performance Pathway (WISH) is an initiative that aims to address the under-representation of women in elite coaching. Programs like WISH should have clear guidance to ensure BIPOC women and women with disabilities are recruited and trained. Unfortunately, there is very little information about the results of this program. It is also unclear the extent to which Paralympic disciplines have been included.
- When there is a lack of credentialed women coaches, NOCs and NPCs should adopt training and licensing programs to address this problem. The U.S. Soccer Federation has launched a project that brings together the first all-women cohort for coaches with lower technical licenses to complete the Club Technical Leadership Pathway (CLT1). Working with partner organizations and sponsors, they have subsidized the expenses, which are significant, of this training.
- Certain disciplines, such as curling, made a concerted effort to have gender balance on their officiating team at Milano Cortina 2026. There was a notable absence of women referees, for example, in ice hockey.

Recommendation #4: Ensure a safe environment for girls and women in Olympic and Paralympic sports

- High-profile cases that received media attention during the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games suggested that a culture of abuse has persisted within the Olympic and Paralympic movements. Ice dancer Laurence Fournier Beaudry publicly denounced a claim of sexual assault made by Ashley Foy (who has now identified herself as the complainant) against Beaudry's boyfriend, ice dancer Nikolaj Sørensen (Hoefling, 2026). Sørensen was banned by Skate Canada following an investigation. Foy stated, "The comments of the reigning Olympic champion and a team in contention for the upcoming Olympic title carry weight, and using their voices to publicly undermine a survivor's truths further enforces the culture of silence in figure skating" (Rainbird, 2026). Moreover, former champion Gabi Papidakis claims to have lost her commentary role with NBC for the 2026 Olympic Winter Games after writing about the abuse of her former skating partner (Pugmire, 2026).
- Disciplinary measures should be adopted to prevent repeat offenders from finding new employment in the Olympic and Paralympic organizations. Recently, athletes from the US Biathlon Association (USBA) revealed that their reports of abuse had been ignored, even after the establishment of the U.S. Center for SafeSport (Bellisle, 2024). Sexual abuse, harassment, and misogyny complaints had been made by six racers. The accused coach was suspended but then rehired to coach the US Paralympic team. The CEO of the USBA at the time of the complaints left to take a position at the International Biathlon Union, where he continues to be General Secretary. The ongoing lawsuits against the U.S. Ski and Snowboard indicate an institutional failure to address cases of assault and harassment (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, 2026).
- The U.S. Center for SafeSport announced it would begin to publicize the names of individuals who have been disciplined based on investigations of assault (Associated Press [AP], 2026). Given that many coaches move between institutions, an international, unified database should be created and published.
- Improved reporting processes would extend the benefits of a safe environment to all athletes. The IOC and IPC should adopt clear disciplinary measures for IFs, NOCs, and NPCs with repeated cases documented by SafeSport and/or other recognized bodies. Given the number of lawsuits that are in process, including one against the USOPC and US Speedskating, which is set to go to trial, it is urgent that the IOC create clearer guidelines on reporting processes (Maese, 2026).

- Anti-harassment and abuse training should be mandatory across the Olympic and Paralympic movements that clarify channels of reporting. The IOC Safe Sport Unit, created in 2022, encourages members to use educational resources on preventing abuse. It currently suggests one point person at NOCs (NPCs not mentioned) to complete training on creating a safe and harassment-free environment. However, these resources are not always updated or user-friendly. For example, the IPC refers athletes to a dead hyperlink to SafeSport, and their website does not clearly identify any person responsible for helping athletes, coaches, or officials to report abuse. There have been reports of harassment and bullying in the IPC, which require investigation; however, athletes have reported feeling unsafe doing so (Stewart, 2024). Any and all reporting should be anonymized and disaggregated by gender, race, and sport.
- The IOC, IPC, IFs, NOCs, and NPCs should make reporting anonymous and easy to access. Frequently, reporting mechanisms are absent or confusing. The IOC Integrity line webpage, which is the most accessible, is currently only in English and French. It would be helpful to expand the languages and make the page accessible for users with hearing and sight impairments.
- Olympic and Paralympic movement leaders should work with sponsors, philanthropists, governments, and committees within the movement to increase resources for safeguarding athletes, coaches, and officials from abuse. Given public funding, it may be necessary to take a more active lobbying role to ensure the budget viability of the U.S. Center for SafeSport.

Recommendation #5: Provide equitable, transparent, and accountable scholarship programs

- The Olympic Scholarships program provides financial and technical support to athletes who often could not afford to continue their training otherwise. Annual reports from the IOC do not detail which programs received subsidies or the rationale behind resource allocation. There are sporadic references to gender equity and individual stories, but little data about how funds are distributed across specific categories. In the report on the 2026 Milano Cortina Games, women received 40.5% of the scholarships (IOC, n.d.b). Efforts should be made to ensure these are equitably distributed among women from racially marginalized communities and women with disabilities.
- It is rather murky how refugee athlete scholarships are obtained. In any case, that seems to be another area of gender inequity. Approximately 75% of the refugee scholarships went to male athletes (IOC, 2025).
- The Olympic and Paralympic movements should consider partnering with an international NGO or scholarly network that can provide an assessment of resource allocation. Without financial transparency, precious resources can be monopolized by the most privileged.

Recommendation #6: Improve media representation and reduce harm in the age of artificial intelligence

- The official social media accounts of the Olympic and Paralympic movements should strive to present athletes in equitable numbers and take care not to reproduce bias. The above report states, "In recent years, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have allowed high-profile athletes such as Eileen Gu and Mikaela Shiffrin to bypass traditional gatekeepers, crafting their own narratives and building global followings. These platforms have been significant for international athletes, whose visibility is no longer dependent on U.S.-centric broadcast priorities. European stars, Asian athletes, and competitors from smaller federations have leveraged social media to globalize their reach." While social media has presented real opportunities for some athletes to receive positive audience engagement, AI images and algorithms designed to prioritize extreme content have spurred online abuse of athletes. In addition, scholars have suggested that women in sports with gambling activity face intensified sexist, racist, and ableist abuse (Wall Tweedie et al., 2026). While social media increases women athletes' ability to reach audiences, it also may deter women from seeking help they need or disengaging from platforms even when harmful. According to the IOC, cyber abuse of athletes during the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games increased by 42% since the 2024 Games (IOC, 2026c).
- Given the current politicization of social media channels, such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, and others, the Olympic movement leaders may want to consider carefully which platforms they utilize. This has important ramifications for athlete abuse. While the IOC and IPC have employed an AI protection system, it remains a challenge to prevent discriminatory abuse online. Facebook declared that it would remove its "fact-checking" controls, which will likely increase the spread of misinformation and allow for more discriminatory abuse.
- NBC Universal, the exclusive Olympic and Paralympic broadcast company in the USA, improved the representation of women commentators, including prominent African American sportscaster Maria Taylor. These gains should be applauded; however, opportunities given to women in the media often reinforce existing biases.
- Media coverage of the Paralympic Games needs further attention and more integration into the Olympic Games. Paralympic sports challenge stereotypes that stigmatize people with disabilities. Paralympic activities are often lost in the webpages and social media of the national sport federations. The Paralympic Games deserve greater support and a brighter spotlight. During the Milano Cortina Games, some Paralympic events lacked commentators. Globally, fans struggled to access broadcasts of the Paralympic events. Often, spectators could only find poor streaming channels.



Social media platforms have allowed high-profile athletes such as Eileen Gu to craft their own narratives and build global followings.

- The IOC Media boasts its increased use of AI for "enhancing replays and real-time analysis, offering deeper insight into performance and technique" (IOC, 2026a). The environmental cost of AI and a review of any ethical implications should be thoroughly reviewed. The United Nations collected data that indicates AI tools have re-entrenched sexism and perpetuated abuse. According to their reporting, "Large language models have repeatedly associated women with the home, family and childcare, while linking men to business, leadership and career success. In some cases, AI systems have generated responses portraying women as sexual objects or as subordinate to men" (Carmo, 2026). Women activists and public figures have reported increased abuse and harassment since the widespread use of AI. The rhetorical embrace of AI by the IOC should be matched by concern. A panel of experts could create guidelines and best practices going forward. Moreover, the impact of AI data centers of poor and racially marginalized communities has been well-documented.

Recommendation #7: Review and reconsider the sex verification testing mandates

- The IOC adopted an official sex verification testing policy in March 2026. There are troubling parts to this policy, including the lack of an appeals process, data privacy provisions, or genetic counseling. Furthermore, it appears that minors face the same testing requirements as adult athletes.
- As written, it appears certain NOCs and NPCs will not be able to apply the testing requirements because of national laws. Austria, France, Norway, and Switzerland have laws that may conflict with mandating this type of testing.
- The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committees announced that they began to identify skiers and snowboarders before Milano Cortina 2026 who would need to undergo sex verification testing (AP, 2025). Officials announced this was in anticipation of the IOC's new policy. The new policy mandates that all athletes in the women's category undergo a test to identify if they have the SRY gene, which is typically located within the Y chromosome. The scientist who discovered the SRY gene, Andrew Sinclair, has stated that it is not a reliable test to determine biological sex (Mark, 2026). The names of the committee members who

created this policy have been withheld from the public, and there has not been independent peer review of this policy that the IOC has published. Athletes on the men's side do not have to undergo the same testing, which implies that the identification as male is a universal advantage across any discipline, which remains a debate among scientists.

- Women, particularly from LGBTQIA+ and racially marginalized communities, experience heightened scrutiny, not only from the media, but also from their NOCs, NPCs, and IFs.
- The new IOC policy places the responsibility for testing with international federations. This is a disincentive for entering athletes into the female category for federations without the resources to perform the tests. The IOC and IPC should implement disciplinary actions for IFs and NOCs that discriminate in sex verification testing, compromise athlete privacy, and operate without scientific evidence.
- Sex verification testing poses an additional monetary burden to women's program budgets, which are already under duress.
- The current NCAA regulations on sex verification, which use certificates and standard documentation to establish eligibility, provide a preferable model.

Recommendation #8: Encourage accessible grassroots participation

- Reporters with disabilities lauded the accessibility of the Milano Cortina Olympic Village (Flores, 2026). These high standards should be the norm going forward. However, the accessibility of public transportation to get to the villages fell short. While the IOC cannot control every municipal transport system, it should try to work with local officials to improve the accessibility of local transportation whenever possible.
- Reporting on NOC programs to increase gender participation at the grassroots level should be publicly available and transparent. Data from NPCs and grassroots development is even more difficult to access and should be integrated in reporting of the NOCs.
- Legacy programs should encourage the widespread adoption of programs to encourage physical activity. Most people, adults and children alike, do not reach the recommended levels of physical activity. The Olympic social legacy programs can play an important role in countering this global trend. Scholarship has shown that participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games does not promote grassroots participation on its own (Donnelly & Kidd, 2024). However, there is clear evidence that social legacy plans, such as the ones attached to the Tokyo 2020 Games, increased exercise and physical activity among the general population. Legacy plans should target communities that already suffer from a lack of recreational sites.
- The program, PlayLA, which the IOC states is the "single largest commitment ever to youth sports development in California," is very promising (IOC, 2021b). These social legacy plans should center marginalized communities in the greater Los Angeles area. While youth sports are very important, the elder communities in California could also benefit from physical activity initiatives. They are consistently identified as being in need of recreational public space, particularly in areas with high immigrant populations.
- Sports facilities should be accessible to athletes, regardless of their gender, racial status, sexual orientation, or disabilities. Disciplinary measures should be taken when NOCS and NPCs fail to comply. For example, it is well-established that Iranian women's access to stadiums is severely limited. This discourages their participation in sports and is a flagrant violation of the Olympic and Paralympic movements' principles. In working with host cities and potential host cities, accessibility should be a strong consideration. While the Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that sports facilities be accessible, many remain non-compliant.

Recommendation #9: The Olympic and Paralympic movements should be leaders in sustainable sports

- Participation in sports activity is intimately related to our environment. Winter sports disciplines face challenges to their sustainability. The Olympic and Paralympic Games provide a marquee opportunity to improve the local environment, whether through transportation, air quality, clean water, or other improvements. Women and girls bear the brunt of climate change and post-disaster scarcity. The current priorities of the IOC and IPC do not adequately center sustainability. For example, the current *Olympic AI Agenda*, likely written in 2024, does not take into account the massive environmental impacts of data centers that threaten the viability of winter sports.
- Lack of water is one of the crucial effects of climate change that disproportionately hurts girls and women. There are small projects, such as the Chilean NOC's water recycling efforts, but they need to occupy a more central place in the Olympic movement. The artificial snow production not only drains water resources, but also uses significant electricity, further harming the environment.
- As of now, the climate initiatives are rather vague and lack measured implementation. An investigation by the United States' National Public Radio stated, "Publicly available documents show that no full environmental assessment was conducted for over 60 percent of the some 98 projects approved for the Games" (Sherlock, 2026).
- Rising temperatures pose an even greater threat to the Paralympic Games, as they are held later in the season. The IOC should consider organizing the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games earlier in the calendar to take advantage of colder temperatures.

Part III: Appendices

Appendix A: Participation

Table A1. The 2022 Olympic Winter Games: Top 10 Delegations by Number of Women

NOC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. United States	108	46%
2. Canada	106	49.3%
3. Russia	103	48.6%
4. China	87	49.4%
T5. Japan	75	60.5%
T5. Switzerland	75	44.9%
7. Czech Republic	55	48.2%
8. Sweden	54	46.6%
9. Germany	51	34.2%
10. Italy	46	39%

Table A2. The 2022 Olympic Winter Games: Top 10 Delegations for Women Relative to Their Male Delegations (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NOC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. Croatia	7	63.6%
2. Japan	75	60.5%
3. Belarus	16	55.2%
4. Poland	30	52.6%
5. Australia	22	51.2%
6. Kazakhstan	17	50%
7. China	87	49.4%
8. Canada	106	49.3%
9. Netherlands	20	48.8%
10. ROC	103	48.6%

Table A3. The 2022 Olympic Winter Games: 10 Worst Delegations for Women Relative to Their Male Delegations (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NOC	Percentage of Female Athletes	Number of Female Athletes
1. Latvia	19%	11
2. Slovakia	26%	13
3. Spain	28.6%	4
4. Germany	34.2%	51
5. Bulgaria	37.5%	6
6. Romania	38.1%	8
7. Lithuania	38.5%	5
8. Italy	39%	46
9. New Zealand	40%	6
10. Brazil	40%	4

Table A4. The 2022 Olympic Winter Games: 10 Worst Delegations by Number of Women (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NOC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
T1. Brazil	4	40%
T1. Spain	4	28.6%
3. Lithuania	5	38.5%
T4. Bulgaria	6	37.5%
T4. Hungary	6	42.9%
T4. New Zealand	6	40%
7. Croatia	7	63.6%
T8. Belgium	8	42.1%
T8. Romania	8	38.1%
10. Latvia	11	19%

Table A5. The 2022 Paralympic Winter Games: Top 5 Delegations, by Number of Women

NPC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. China	38	32.8%
2. United States	15	23.1%
3. Canada	13	27.1%
T4. Germany	8	47.1%
T4. Japan	8	26.7%
T4. Ukraine	8	40%

Table A6. The 2022 Paralympic Winter Games: Top Five Delegations for Women Relative to Their Male Delegations (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NPC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. Germany	8	47.1%
2. Ukraine	8	40%
3. China	13	27.1%
4. Austria	5	31.5%
5. Japan	8	26.7%

Table A7. The 2022 Paralympic Winter Games: Five Worst Delegations for Women Relative to Their Male Delegations (of Delegations with 10 or More Athletes)

NPC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. Czech Republic	0	0%
2. South Korea	2	6.5%
3. Italy	4	12.5%
4. France	2	13.3%
5. Slovakia	6	21.4%

Table A8. The 2022 Paralympic Winter Games: Five Worst Delegations by Number of Women (of delegations with 10 or more athletes)

NPC	Number of Female Athletes	Percentage of Female Athletes
1. Czech Republic	0	0%
T2. France	2	13.3%
T2. South Korea	2	6.5%
T4. Poland	3	27.3%
T4. Switzerland	3	25%



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Akari Fukunishi #3 of Team Japan was the only female athlete in the para ice hockey mixed team competition at the 2026 Games and only the fourth woman to compete in Paralympic para ice hockey.

Table A9. U.S. Representation by Sport in the Olympic Winter Games, 1998–2026, by Gender

	Female, 1998	Male, 1998	Female, 2002	Male, 2002	Female, 2006	Male, 2006	Female, 2010	Male, 2010	Female, 2014	Male, 2014	Female, 2018	Male, 2018	Female, 2022	Male, 2022	Female, 2026	Male, 2026
Alpine Skiing	10	12	10	10	9	8	10	10	10	10	10	12	11	11	11	6
Biathlon	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Bobsleigh	0	8	4	8	4	8	6	12	6	10	4	12	4	8	6	8
Cross Country Skiing	5	5	7	9	7	9	5	6	7	7	11	9	8	6	8	8
Curling	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	6
Figure Skating	7	6	7	7	8	8	7	8	8	7	7	7	8	8	8	8
Freestyle Skiing	6	8	6	8	6	8	8	10	13	12	14	15	16	16	16	16
Ice Hockey	20	22	20	23	20	23	21	23	21	25	23	25	23	25	23	25
Luge	3	7	3	7	3	7	3	7	3	7	3	7	3	5	5	6
Nordic Combined	0	4	0	4	0	5	0	5	0	4	0	5	0	5	0	2
Short Track Speed Skating	5	6	4	4	6	5	5	5	3	4	3	5	5	2	5	3
Skeleton	NA	NA	2	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2
Ski Jumping	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	3	3	4	3	4	1	4	3	3
Ski Mountaineering	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	1
Snowboarding	8	6	7	7	7	7	8	10	11	12	11	14	12	14	12	12
Speed Skating	7	7	7	10	8	10	9	9	9	9	6	7	5	7	6	7
Totals	**81**	**105**	**87**	**115**	**87**	**117**	**93**	**121**	**106**	**124**	**107**	**134**	**108**	**126**	**115**	**117**

Table A10. U.S. Representation by Sport in the Paralympic Winter Games, 1998–2026, by Gender

	Female, 1998	Male, 1998	Female, 2002	Male, 2002	Female, 2006	Male, 2006	Female, 2010	Male, 2010	Female, 2014	Male, 2014	Female, 2018	Male, 2018	Female, 2022	Male, 2022	Female, 2026	Male, 2026
Alpine Skiing	8	16	13	19	7	21	10	14	14	20	7	13	3	14	8	15
Biathlon	0	0	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	10	3	7	4	4	6	3
Cross Country Skiing	2	9	3	7	3	6	2	4	4	12	5	8	7	7	6	7
Para Ice Hockey	0	14	0	15	0	15	0	15	0	17	0	17	0	17	0	17
Snowboard	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	5	9	3	9	3	5
Wheelchair Curling	NA	NA	NA	NA	1	4	1	4	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	4
Totals	**10**	**39**	**16**	**41**	**11**	**44**	**13**	**36**	**20**	**52**	**19**	**50**	**15**	**50**	**20**	**48**

Appendix A2: NCAA and Olympic Hockey: The Olympic Winter Games as Women's Hockey's Largest Stage

NCAA Division Representation

- **Division I:** 92 student-athletes
- **Division II:** 17 student-athletes
- **Division III:** 15 student-athletes

NCAA Conferences

The Olympic women's ice hockey field reflected the competitive landscape of college hockey with 16 NCAA conferences represented.

- **Big Ten Conference:** 38 student-athletes
- **Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference:** 16 student-athletes
- **Liberty League:** 12 student-athletes
- **The Ivy League:** 11 student-athletes
- **America East Conference:** 10 student-athletes
- **Coastal Athletic Association:** 9 student-athletes
- **Patriot League:** 9 student-athletes
- **Atlantic Coast Conference:** 5 student-athletes
- **Big East Conference:** 5 student-athletes
- **The Summit League:** 5 student-athletes
- **Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference:** 4 student-athletes
- **Northeast Conference:** 3 student-athletes
- **New England Small College Athletic Conference:** 2 student-athletes
- **Ohio Valley Conference:** 2 student-athletes
- **Great Northeast Athletic Conference:** 1 student-athletes
- **Northeast 10 Conference:** 1 student-athletes

There are six sport-specific conferences represented as well — Western Collegiate Hockey Association (54), Hockey East (32), Eastern College Athletic Conference (28), Atlantic Hockey America (9), New England Women's Hockey Alliance (3) and Little East Conference (1).

School Representation

There were 36 NCAA schools represented in the 2026 Olympic women's ice hockey field.

- **Ohio State (13):** Cayla Barnes, Hannah Bilka, Andrea Brändli, Joy Dunne, Jenn Gardiner, Sophie Jaques, Mira Jungåker, Sofie Lundin, Emma Maltais, Jenna Raunio, Natalie Spooner, Hilda Svensson, Sanni Vanhanen
- **Wisconsin (12):** Emily Clark, Britta Curl-Salemme, Ann-Renée Desbiens, Laila Edwards, Caroline Harvey, Hilary Knight, Ava McNaughton, Sarah Nurse, Adéla Šapovalivová, Kirsten Simms, Blayre Turnbull, Daryl Watts
- **Minnesota (9):** Josefin Bouveng, Taylor Heise, Nelli Laitinen, Natálie Mlýnková, Abbey Murphy, Kelly Pannek, Tereza Plosová, Lee Stecklein, Grace Zumwinkle.
- **Northeastern (9):** Chloé Aurard-Bushee, Alessia Baechler, Kendall Coyne Schofield, Aerin Frankel, Lisa Johansson, Denisa Křížová, Alina Müller, Gwyneth Philips, Hayley Scamurra.
- **Minnesota Duluth (8):** Tindra Holm, Katarina "Nina" Jobst-Smith, Thea Johansson, Ida Karlsson, Jocelyne Larocque, Katerina Mrázová, Emma Söderberg, Lara Stalder
- **St. Cloud State (8):** Sanni Ahola, Klára Hymlárová, Laura Kluge, Emilia Kyrkkö, Jenniina Nylund, Svenja Voight, Siiri Yrjölä, Laura Zimmermann
- **Clarkson (7):** Erin Ambrose, Renata Fast, Manon le Scodan, Michaela Pejzlová, Ella Shelton, Andrea Trnková, Haley Winn
- **University of Maine (7):** Anna Caumo, Rahel Enzler, Ida Kuoppala, Vendula Pribylová, Tereza Vanišová, Lilli Welcke, Luisa Welcke
- **Boston U. (6):** Andrea Brändli, Nadia Mattivi, Marie-Philip Poulin, Kayla Tutino, Lilli Welcke, Luisa Welcke
- **Boston College (5):** Cayla Barnes, Hannah Bilka, Alex Carpenter, Megan Keller, Daryl Watts
- **Cornell (4):** Laura Fortino, Rory Guilday, Brianne Jenner, Kristin O'Neill
- **Penn State (4):** Jessica Adolfsson, Matilde Fantin, Nicole Hall, Tessa Janecke
- **Colgate (3):** Kristýna Kaltounková, Noemi Neubauerová, Kayle Osborne
- **North Dakota (3):** Michelle Karvinen, Emma Nuutinen, Susanna Tapani
- **Providence (3):** Sandra Abstreiter, Sara Hjalmarsson, Noemi Neubauerová
- **St. Lawrence (3):** Julia Gosling, Kristen Guerriero, Justine Reyes

- **Vermont (3):** Sini Karjalainen, Julia Mesplède, Natálie Mlýnková
- **Dartmouth (2):** Michaela Hesová, Laura Stacey
- **Harvard (2):** Kristin Della Rovere, Emerance Maschmeyer
- **Lindenwood (2):** Lucie Quarto, Élina Zilliox
- **Mercyhurst (2):** Emma Nuutinen, Julia Schalin
- **Princeton (2):** Sarah Fillier, Claire Thompson
- **Quinnipiac (2):** Jade Barbirati, Kati Tabin
- **Rensselaer (2):** Nina Christof, Andrea Trnková
- **St. Thomas (Minnesota) (2):** Saskia Maurer, Nicole Vallario
- **Brown:** Jacqueline Pierri
- **Franklin Pierce:** Anna Caumo
- **Holy Cross:** Naemi Herzig
- **Long Island University:** Tindra Holm
- **Merrimack:** Dominika Lásková
- **Norwich:** Sophie Leclerc
- **Sacred Heart:** Amie Fielding Varano
- **Syracuse:** Akane Hosoyamada
- **Trinity (Connecticut):** Marta Mazzocchi
- **Union (New York):** Monja Wagner
- **Wesleyan (Connecticut):** Rei Halloran

Global Impact

NCAA women's ice hockey Olympians competed for 10 national teams.

- **United States (23):** Cayla Barnes, Hannah Bilka, Alex Carpenter, Kendall Coyne Schofield, Britta Curl-Salemme, Joy Dunne, Laila Edwards, Aerin Frankel, Rory Guilday, Caroline Harvey, Taylor Heise, Tessa Janecke, Megan Keller, Hilary Knight, Ava McNaughton, Abbey Murphy, Kelly Pannek, Gwyneth Philips, Hayley Scamurra, Kirsten Simms, Lee Stecklein, Haley Winn, Grace Zumwinkle
- **Canada (23):** Erin Ambrose, Emily Clark, Ann-Renée Desbiens, Renata Fast, Sarah Fillier, Jenn Gardiner, Julia Gosling, Sophie Jaques, Brianne Jenner, Jocelyne Larocque, Emma Maltais, Emerance Maschmeyer, Sarah Nurse, Kristin O'Neill, Kayle Osborne, Marie-Philip Poulin, Ella Shelton, Natalie Spooner, Laura Stacey, Kati Tabin, Claire Thompson, Blayre Turnbull, Daryl Watts
- **Czech Republic (14):** Michaela Hesová, Klára Hymlárová, Kristýna Kaltounková, Denisa Krížová, Dominika Lásková, Natálie Mlýnková, Katerina Mrázová, Noemi Neubauerová, Michaela Pejzlová, Tereza Plosová, Vendula Pribylová, Adéla Šapovalivová, Andrea Trnková, Tereza Vanišová
- **Sweden (13):** Jessica Adolfsson, Josefin Bouveng, Nicole Hall, Sara Hjalmarsson, Tindra Holm, Lisa Johansson, Thea Johansson, Mira Jungåker, Ida Karlsson, Sofie Lundin, Jenna Raunio, Emma Söderberg, Hilda Svensson
- **Finland (12):** Sanni Ahola, Sini Karjalainen, Michelle Karvinen, Ida Kuoppala, Emilia Kyrkkö, Nelli Laitinen, Emma Nuutinen, Jenniina Nylund, Julia Schalin, Susanna Tapani, Sanni Vanhanen, Sirri Yrjölä
- **Italy (11):** Anna Caumo, Kristin Della Rovere, Matilde Fantin, Amie Fielding Varano, Laura Fortino, Kristen Guerriero, Nadia Mattivi, Marta Mazzocchi, Jacqueline Pierri, Justine Reyes, Kayla Tutino
- **Switzerland (10):** Alessia Baechler, Andrea Brändli, Rahel Enzler, Naemi Herzig, Saskia Maurer, Alina Müller, Lara Stalder, Nicole Vallario, Monja Wagner, Laura Zimmermann
- **France (7):** Chloé Aurard-Bushee, Jade Barbirati, Manon le Scodan, Sophie Leclerc, Julia Mesplède, Lucie Quarto, Élina Zilliox
- **Germany (7):** Sandra Abstreiter, Nina Christof, Katarina "Nina" Jobst-Smith, Laura Kluge, Svenja Voight, Lilli Welcke, Luisa Welcke
- **Japan (2):** Rei Halloran, Akane Hosoyamada

NCAA Champions

Twenty NCAA champions competed in Milan, with over 20 athletes bringing Frozen Four experience to Italy.

- **Three NCAA championships:** Britta Curl-Salemme (Wisconsin), Lee Stecklein (Minnesota)
- **Two NCAA championships:** Laila Edwards (Wisconsin), Jenn Gardiner (Ohio State), Caroline Harvey (Wisconsin), Hilary Knight (Wisconsin), Jocelyne Larocque (Minnesota Duluth), Kelly Pannek (Minnesota), Michaela Pejzlová (Clarkson), Ella Shelton (Clarkson), Kirsten Simms (Wisconsin)
- **One NCAA championship:** Erin Ambrose (Clarkson), Cayla Barnes (Ohio State), Hannah Bilka (Ohio State), Andrea Brändli (Ohio State), Emily Clark (Wisconsin), Joy Dunne (Ohio State), Renata Fast (Clarkson), Sophie Jaques (Ohio State), Sophie Leclerc (Norwich), Ava McNaughton (Wisconsin), Daryl Watts (Wisconsin)

Appendix B: Leadership

Figure 6, showing women's representation of the IOC Executive Board and IOC Membership, 2008-26, is available in the text on page 30.

Table B1. Gender Representation of the IOC Executive Board and IOC Membership, 2016–26

	Year	Male	Percentage Male	Female	Percentage Female	Total
IOC Executive Board	2026	9	60%	6	40%	15
	2024	10	67.7%	5	33.3%	15
	2022	10	67.7%	5	33.3%	15
	2021	11	73.3%	4	26.7%	15
	2018	11	73.3%	4	26.7%	15
	2016	11	78.6%	3	21.4%	14
IOC Membership	2026	59	55.7%	47	44.3%	106
	2024	61	58.1%	44	41.9%	105
	2022	65	61.3%	41	38.7%	106
	2021	63	61.7%	39	38.3%	102
	2018	71	71%	29	29%	100
	2016	69	75%	23	25.%	92



IOC Vice President Nawal El Moutawakel speaks during the Laureus World Sports Awards 2024 nominations announcement at Real Casa de Correos in Madrid, Spain.

Table B2. Gender Representation of IOC Committees/Commissions

Commission, Committee, or Board	Number of Men	Number of Women	Total	Percentage Female in 2026	Percentage Female in 2022
Athletes' Commission*	11	20	31	64.5%	65.5%
Athletes' Entourage Commission	24	17	41	41.5%	44.7%
Audit Committee	3	3	6	50%	50%
Coordination Commission: Milano Cortina 2026*	5	6	11	54.5%	54.6%
Coordination Commission: Dakar 2026	4	4	8	50%	57.1%
Coordination Commission: LA 2028*	18	7	25	28%	34.6%
Coordination Commission: Alps 2030	6	3	9	33.3%	N/A
Coordination Commission: Brisbane 2032*	9	8	17	47.1%	64.3%
Culture and Olympic Heritage*	12	17	29	58.6%	54.2%
Digital Engagement and Marketing Communications Commission*	14	14	28	50%	37.5%
ESports Commission	12	9	21	42.9%	N/A
Ethics Commission*	3	5	8	62.5%	66.7%
Finance Commission	3	3	6	50%	40%
Future Host Commission for the Games of the Olympiad*	4	4	8	50%	50%
Future Host Commission for the Olympic Winter Games	3	5	8	62.5%	50%
Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission*	9	25	34	73.5%	70%
Health, Medicine and Science Commission	7	7	14	50%	44.4%
Human Resources Committee Commission	2	0	2	0%	25%
IOC Advisory Committee on Human Rights*	3	6	9	66.7%	N/A
IOC Members Election Commission*	3	3	6	50%	50%
IOC Television and Marketing Services - Board of Directors	4	4	8	50%	50%
Legal Affairs Commission	3	4	7	57.1%	50%
Olympic Broadcasting Services - Boards of Directors, Switzerland	5	4	9	44.4%	12.5%
Olympic Broadcasting Services - Boards of Directors, Spain	5	1	6	16.7%	20%
Olympic Channel - Board of Directors, Switzerland	9	3	12	25%	15.4%
Olympic Channel - Board of Directors, Spain	6	2	8	25%	12.5%
Olympic Education Commission*	15	16	31	51.6%	55.6%
Olympic Programme Commission	14	10	24	41.7%	39.1%
Olympic Solidarity Commission	11	10	21	47.6%	35%
Olympism365 Commission*	16	22	38	57.9%	N/A
Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Commission	18	12	30	40%	40%
Revenues and Commercial Partnerships Commission	19	8	27	29.6%	N/A
Sustainability and Legacy Commission	14	24	38	63.2%	52.9%
Technology and Technical Innovation Commission	9	7	16	43.8%	35.3%
Delegate Members (no chair)	5	2	7	28.6%	N/A
Total	**308**	**295**	**603**	**48.9%**	**46.5%**

** indicates female chair*

Table B3. Overview of National Olympic Committee Presidents and Secretaries General by Region, 2016–26

Region	Year	Number of Male Presidents	Number of Female Presidents	Number of Male Secretaries General	Number of Female Secretaries General
ANOCA	2026	50	4	46	7
	2024	49	5	48	6
	2022	50	4	49	5
	2021	50	4	49	5
	2018	50	4	45	6
	2016	49	4	47	6
PASO	2026	33	8	26	15
	2024	32	9	29	11
	2022	34	7	32	9
	2021	34	7	32	9
	2018	35	5	30	9
	2016	37	4	33	8
OCA	2026	41	3	41	3
	2024	42	2	41	3
	2022	42	1	41	2
	2021	42	1	41	1
	2018	42	1	40	3
	2016	43	0	40	3
EOC	2026	40	9	41	8
	2024	44	6	40	10
	2022	43	7	41	9
	2021	44	6	39	11
	2018	44	4	38	9
	2016	46	3	41	7
ONOC	2026	13	4	11	6
	2024	15	2	10	7
	2022	16	1	12	5
	2021	16	1	12	5
	2018	17	0	12	5
	2016	16	1	11	6

Figure 7, showing the percentage of male and female National Olympic Committee Presidents by region, is available in the text on page 31.

Table B4. Gender Breakdown of Listed NOC Positions By Region, 2016–26

Region	Year	Total Number of Men	Percentage Male	Total Number of Women	Percentage Female
ANOCA	2026	96	89.7%	11	10.3%
	2024	97	89.8%	11	10.2%
	2022	99	91.7%	9	8.3%
	2021	99	91.7%	9	8.3%
	2018	94	90.4%	10	9.6%
	2016	96	90.6%	10	9.4%
PASO	2026	59	72%	23	28%
	2024	61	75.3%	20	24.7%
	2022	66	80.5%	16	19.5%
	2021	66	80.5%	16	19.5%
	2018	65	82.3%	14	17.7%
	2016	70	85.4%	12	14.6%
OCA	2026	82	93.2%	6	6.8%
	2024	83	94.3%	5	5.7%
	2022	83	96.5%	3	3.5%
	2021	83	97.6%	2	2.4%
	2018	82	95.4%	4	4.6%
	2016	83	96.5%	3	3.5%
EOC	2026	81	82.6%	17	17.4%
	2024	84	84%	16	16%
	2022	84	84%	16	16%
	2021	83	83%	17	17%
	2018	82	86.3%	13	13.7%
	2016	87	89.7%	10	10.3%
ONOC	2026	24	70.6%	10	29.4%
	2024	25	73.5%	9	26.5%
	2022	28	82.4%	6	17.6%
	2021	28	82.4%	6	17.6%
	2018	29	85.3%	5	14.7%
	2016	27	79.4%	7	20.6%

Table B5. Gender of NOC Leadership Teams, 2016–26

Region	Year	All-Male Teams	Male-Female Teams	All-Female Teams
ANOCA	2026	42	11	0
	2024	43	11	0
	2022	45	9	0
	2021	45	9	0
	2018	41	10	0
	2016	44	8	1
PASO	2026	22	15	4
	2024	23	14	3
	2022	26	14	1
	2021	27	12	2
	2018	25	14	0
	2016	29	12	0
OCA	2026	38	6	0
	2024	39	5	0
	2022	40	3	0
	2021	41	2	0
	2018	39	4	0
	2016	40	3	0
EOC	2026	32	17	0
	2024	35	14	1
	2022	35	14	1
	2021	34	15	1
	2018	35	11	1
	2016	39	10	0
ONOC	2026	9	6	2
	2024	10	5	2
	2022	12	4	1
	2021	12	4	1
	2018	12	5	0
	2016	10	7	0

Figure 8, showing women's representation on International Federation Executive Boards/Committees, is available in the text on page 32.

Table B6. Gender Distribution of Members and Chairs in the Paralympic Governance Structure

Standing Committees	Number of Men	Number of Women	Total Members	Percentage Female
Audit, Risk and Finance Board Sub-Committee*	3	2	5	40%
Classification Compliance and Oversight Committee*	4	4	8	50%
HR and Remuneration Board Sub-Committee	1	2	3	66.7%
Medical Expert Advisory Group for the Milano-Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games	4	2	6	33.3%
Nominations Committee	3	2	5	40%
Paralympic Games Committee	9	2	11	18.2%
Women in Sport Committee*	1	7	8	87.5%
World Para Sports Unit Board	2	3	5	60%
IPC Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) Committee	4	1	5	20%
Total	**31**	**25**	**56**	**44.6%**

** Chaired by a woman*



Sydney Peterson of Team USA competes during the para cross-country skiing women's 20km interval start standing event.

Table B7. NPC Presidents, Main Contacts, and Total Positions, 2016–26

		Presidents				Main Contact				Total Positions			
		Men	Women	Percentage Female	Total	Men	Women	Percentage Female	Total	Men	Women	Percentage Female	Total
Africa	2026	41	2	4.7%	43	42	5	10.6%	47	83	7	7.8%	90
	2024	40	2	4.8%	42	39	5	11.4%	44	79	7	8.1%	86
	2022	40	3	7%	43	39	7	15.2%	46	79	10	11.2%	89
	2021	40	4	9.1%	44	39	7	15.2%	46	79	11	12.2%	90
	2018	42	6	12.5%	48	38	9	19.2%	47	80	15	15.8%	95
	2016	42	6	12.5%	48	34	10	22.7%	44	76	16	17.4%	92
Americas	2026	27	7	20.6%	34	24	9	27.3%	33	51	16	23.9%	67
	2024	25	8	24.2%	33	23	9	28.1%	32	48	17	26.2%	65
	2022	22	11	33.3%	33	21	11	34.4%	32	43	22	33.8%	65
	2021	22	11	33.3%	33	21	11	34.4%	32	43	22	33.8%	65
	2018	21	9	30%	30	19	13	40.6%	32	40	22	35.5%	62
	2016	19	9	32.1%	28	17	13	43.3%	30	36	22	37.9%	58
Asia	2026	31	8	20.5%	39	35	9	20.5%	44	66	17	20.5%	83
	2024	30	10	25%	40	35	9	20.5%	44	65	19	22.6%	84
	2022	32	7	17.9%	39	32	9	22.%	41	64	16	20%	80
	2021	35	5	12.5%	40	32	9	22.%	41	67	14	17.3%	81
	2018	36	3	7.7%	39	34	8	19.1%	42	70	11	13.6%	81
	2016	37	3	7.5%	40	34	7	17.1%	41	71	10	12.3%	81
Europe	2026	38	11	22.5%	49	27	21	43.8%	48	65	32	33%	97
	2024	38	11	22.5%	49	29	20	40.8%	49	67	31	32.3%	98
	2022	37	11	22.9%	48	24	23	48.9%	47	61	34	35.8%	95
	2021	37	11	22.9%	48	24	24	50%	48	61	35	36.5%	96
	2018	38	9	19.2%	47	26	21	44.7%	47	64	30	31.9%	94
	2016	39	7	15.2%	46	28	18	39.1%	46	67	25	27.2%	92
Oceania	2026	5	3	37.5%	8	5	2	28.6%	7	10	5	33.3%	15
	2024	4	4	50%	8	4	3	42.9%	7	8	7	46.7%	15
	2022	6	3	33.3%	9	3	6	66.7%	9	9	9	50%	18
	2021	6	3	33.3%	9	3	6	66.7%	9	9	9	50%	18
	2018	7	2	22.2%	9	5	4	44.4%	9	12	6	33.3%	18
	2016	7	1	12.5%	8	4	4	50%	8	11	5	31.3%	16

Figure 9, showing women's representation on NPC leadership teams by region, 2016–26, is available in the text on page 33.

Figure 10, showing women's representation in USOPC leadership positions, is available in the text on page 34.

Table B8. Gender Representation of NGB Leadership, 2018–26

	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male in 2026	Percentage Female in 2026	Percentage Female in 2022	Percentage Female in 2018
US Biathlon Board of Directors	9	6	15	60%	40%	30.8%	42.9%
USA Bobsled & Skeleton Board of Directors	12	6	18	66.7%	33.3%	30.8%	33.3%
USA Curling Board of Directors*	13	4	17	76.5%	23.5%	31.3%	24%
US Figure Skating Board of Directors*	6	9	15	40%	60%	66.7%	56.2%
USA Hockey Executive Committee	19	5	24	79.2%	20.8%	33.3%	23.5%
USA Luge Board of Directors*	10	2	12	83.3%	16.7%	36.4%	27.3%
USA Nordic Sport Board of Directors	10	2	12	83.3%	16.7%	20%	N/A
US Ski & Snowboard Board of Directors	19	12	31	61.3%	38.7%	31.8%	31.8%
US Speedskating Board of Directors	6	3	9	66.7%	33.3%	20%	20%

Figure 11, showing women's representation in U.S. NGB leadership, 2018–26, is available in the text on page 35.

Figure 12, showing the percentage of women U.S. Olympic Coaches, 2014–26, is available in the text on page 35.

Figure 13, showing the gender breakdown of Olympic and Paralympic coaches by position, is available in the text on page 36.



Erin Jackson of Team USA and Femke Kok of Team Netherlands compete in the speedskating women's 500m.

Appendix C: Methodology: Marking Where We Are, Where We Need to Go

This report assesses the representation of women as athletes and leaders, as well as in media coverage in the Olympic and Paralympic Movements:

Participation: To determine the number of female and male Olympians and Paralympians, the authors counted the number of female and male athletes by NOCs and NPCs, as well as in each sport and discipline. Various media sources were relied upon, including official results and individual NOC and NPC websites. The IOC does not provide the overall final numbers to the public. The IPC shares the participation data on their website. Several discrepancies exist among official records — alternate athletes were counted in some and not others; however, alternates did participate and thus were counted in this report.

Leadership Positions: To determine the number of women in leadership positions, the authors primarily relied upon information available on organizational websites. While organizational websites may occasionally contain outdated or inaccurate information, they are valuable public-facing platforms that help illustrate gender inequities. The IOC, IFs, USOPC, and the majority of NGBs publicize their committee and commission rosters. These include the IOC Executive Board, IOC Membership, IOC Commissions/Committees, IF executive committees, USOPC Board of Directors, USOPC committees, and U.S. NGB executive committees. If committee membership was not made publicly available, authors contacted the organization directly to secure a roster.

Gender for all positions was primarily determined through the inclusion of "Mr.," "Ms.," and "Mrs." in organizational information published online. In instances where these titles were not used, the authors looked at the pronouns used in individuals' biographies. Data on leadership positions was collected January 1 through January 31, 2026, prior to the Opening Ceremonies of the Olympic Games. This was to ensure data was collected before any IOC and IPC elections.

Identifying the gender breakdown of accredited U.S. Olympic and Paralympic coaches is a challenge. Accredited coaches are those designated by their country's NOCs and officially registered by the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games. While the IOC has released the percentage of female coaches following the Games, the USOPC has not. When determining the number of women in coaching positions, the authors first reached out to each organization to secure a list of coaches. If that did not provide the necessary information, authors included the individuals listed in official media guides, online rosters, and/or press releases. Coaches are, therefore, labeled as "listed" in this report instead of accredited. Those identified as "head coaches" in this report were people who headed the team or the entirety of the sport, such as U.S. Biathlon National Team Head Coach Armin Auchentaller. "Assistant coaches" refers to those who helped the head coach. "Individual coaches" refers to athletes' personal coaches, oftentimes present in individual sports. The data focused on these three categories and did not include team leaders, health care providers, general managers, directors of player personnel, video coaches, equipment managers, strength and conditioning coaches, or mental performance coaches.



Tabitha Stoecker of Team Great Britain, with teammate Matt Weston won the first Olympic skeleton mixed team competition.

This lack of transparency about coaches further hinders efforts to address gender inequality. Without consistent and accessible data from the USOPC, it is difficult to track progress or identify disparities. The findings from this report underscore the need for standardized and publicized reporting to advance gender equity in coaching.

Media Representation: The media coverage section continues the new methodology employed in the Paris 2024 report. To analyze whether the International Olympic Committee and the United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee were reaching the goals set related to portrayals of athletes outlined in the IOC Gender Equality Review Project (2024), analysis focuses on official Instagram accounts. This shift also aligns the media coverage section of this report more closely with the athlete and leadership sections that examine data from the official governing bodies. Thus, the media analysis examined photos posted to the following Instagram accounts' main feeds: @MilanoCortina2026, @Olympics, @NBCOlympics, and @TeamUSA. These are the official governing body accounts and the official media rights holder for both the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the United States (NBC). For the Olympic Winter Games, data was collected once per day during the Games from February 5 through February 23, 2026. The analysis for the Paralympic Winter Games was similar, examining photos posted to the main feeds of the following Instagram accounts: @MilanoCortina2026, @Paralympics, @NBCOlympics, and @TeamUSA. Data was collected once per day during the Games from March 5 to March 23, 2026.

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