



International
Olympic
Committee

PORTRAYAL GUIDELINES

GENDER-EQUAL, FAIR AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION IN SPORT

2024 Edition



This is the third edition of the Portrayal Guidelines created for the Olympic Movement stakeholders, in line with the IOC Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for the 2021-2024 period. These call for the implementation of “gender-equal and fair portrayal practices in all forms of communication” across the IOC, at the Olympic Games and throughout the Olympic Movement – whose members are, in turn, encouraged to adopt and adapt these Guidelines according to cultural contexts. This edition updates the 2018 Portrayal Guidelines, which were created as one of the recommendations of the IOC Gender Equality Review Project.



CONTENTS

	4	Introduction
	5	Portrayal defined
1	06	Part one: The context. Recognising stereotypes and changing the clichés
	07	Terms to know
	08	Portrayal in sport: key barriers to date
	09	Reframe the narrative
	10	Sport as a driver of equality and inclusion: a collective responsibility and opportunity
	11	References
2	12	Part two: The practice. Adopting fair and balanced portrayal practices
	13	Content and editorial
	14	Imagery
	15	Language and terminology
	17	Coverage and airtime
	18	Interviews and commentary
	19	References
3	20	Part three: Taking action. Checklists to facilitate implementation
	21	Portrayal in sport checklist
	22	How sports organisations can facilitate gender-balanced coverage
	23	Tracking your output
	25	References
	26	ANNEX: Transgender sportspeople and athletes with sex variations
	27	Terms to know
	29	Respecting difference: implementation guidance
	31	References
	32	Additional resources

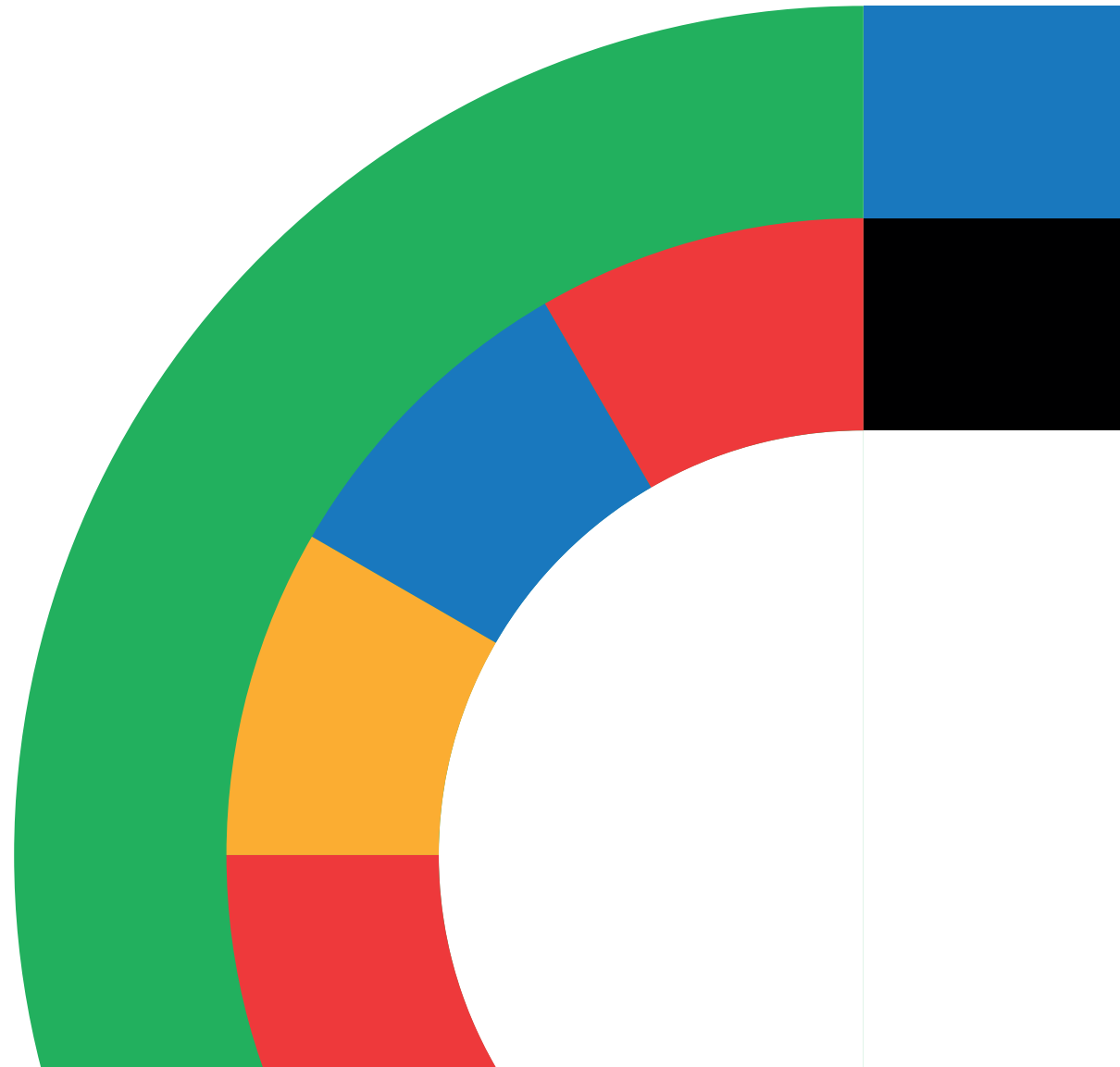
INTRODUCTION

Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, and sports coverage is very influential in shaping gender norms and stereotypes.

At the International Olympic Committee (IOC), we know that the Olympic Games are an incredible spotlight. They are a unique and powerful platform to showcase the universality and diversity of sport to people across the globe, and particularly to women in all their diversity and other members of minority groups, who are often discouraged from getting involved in sport due to not seeing themselves represented within the prevailing sports cultures and media. The two weeks of Olympic coverage are a rare time when women’s sports and sportswomen – irrespective of nation, race, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status – are likely to make the headlines. But outside that period, both the quantity and quality of women’s sports coverage remain inconsistent and limited in comparison to that of men.

Sport has the power to shift how women in all their diversity are seen and how they see themselves. As leaders, communicators, content creators and media outlets within the sports movement, we **set the tone** as to how sportspeople and athletes – globally – are pictured, presented, described, talked about and represented, i.e. portrayed, across all forms of media and communication.

The following Guidelines are intended to raise awareness of what constitutes gender bias across the various aspects of portrayal within the sporting context, and how this can be overcome to ensure our content and communications are more inclusive, balanced and representative of the world we live in.



PORTRAYAL DEFINED

At the IOC, we define portrayal as follows:

The language (words and expressions), images and voices used, the quality and quantity of coverage and the prominence given, when depicting individuals or groups in communications and the media.

It's as much **who** you show or write/talk about as **how** you show them or write/talk about them.
 It's the words, narrative and tone.
 It's the images and voices.
 It's the context and framing.

BEYOND GENDER

Women, like men, are not a homogenous group, nor are they solely defined by their gender identity. Indeed, women are as different from each other as they are from men. All individuals have multiple intersecting dimensions that shape their experiences of sport. Other social markers of difference such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, culture or sexual orientation (to list but a few) inform a person's identity. Balanced portrayal practices should ensure that the diversity within and among different groups are both considered and reflected. After all, not all sportspeople look or sound the same, nor do they experience life exclusively in terms of their gender identity.



1 THE CONTEXT

Recognising stereotypes and changing the clichés

Gender-based preconceptions, stereotypes and social norms have led, and continue to lead, to a difference in treatment between people of different genders. One of the difficulties in this area is knowing what the terms mean and understanding the concepts. This edition of the Portrayal Guidelines presents some context and definitions to help guide your presentation of gender, your presentation of gender in sport, and women in all their diversity.

“Stereotypes, discriminatory social norms and a lack of representation remain some of the most pervasive barriers to gender equality around the world.”

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
Chair of the IOC Advisory Committee on Human Rights

TERMS TO KNOW

SEX: a category assigned at birth and refers to the biological characteristics that define a person as female, male or intersex (World Health Organization).

GENDER: refers to both one's sense of self and to the system of socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for people of different genders (UN Women).

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS: an association or attitude about a person or social group formed beyond our control and awareness (Catalyst 2019).

GENDER STEREOTYPES: preconceived ideas on people's traditionally assigned roles, attributes and characteristics according to the sex category they are assigned at birth. For example, the role of women has generally been confined to the domestic and family sphere (OHCHR 2014). Negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes ultimately perpetuate gender inequality and hold back change (UN Women 2020).

GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE: when the language being used is not gender specific (EIGE 2018), meaning with no specific reference to a particular sex or social gender but rather considering people in general. Using gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language avoids words and expressions which could be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or sexist, instead placing women and men at the same level, and helping reduce gender stereotypes (UN Women 2017).

GENDER BALANCE IN COMMUNICATION: the process of integrating a gender perspective or lens into all aspects of an organisation's strategies and initiatives, and into its culture, systems, operations and communications. Applying a gender lens means factoring how your decisions impact genders differently.

GENDER BIAS: prejudiced actions or thoughts that affect a person or a group of people based on their perceived gender. Gender-biased language either implicitly/unconsciously or explicitly/consciously favours one gender over another, leading to unequal and/or unfair treatment. It is a form of gender discrimination (EIGE 2018).



PORTRAYAL IN SPORT: KEY BARRIERS TO DATE

Research and testimonials have repeatedly shown that gender contributes to fundamental differences in how people are treated in sport. Here, we outline some of these recurring gender biases and challenges as background and context to why portrayal in sport is important. In summary, there are three overarching challenges specific to women’s sport and sportswomen:

1. UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SPORT

With an exception during the Olympic Games and other major international sports events (Women’s Sports Foundation 2020), there is a global **lack of coverage** of women’s sport and sportswomen, with the vast majority of resources and exposure focused on men’s sport.

Sports deemed “gender appropriate” are more likely to be covered (e.g. women’s gymnastics and men’s boxing vs women’s boxing and men’s gymnastics).

In terms of leadership, including executive positions and coaching, and across sports media, steady progress is being made to close the gender gap but gender balance is yet to be achieved.

2. LACK OF RECOGNITION

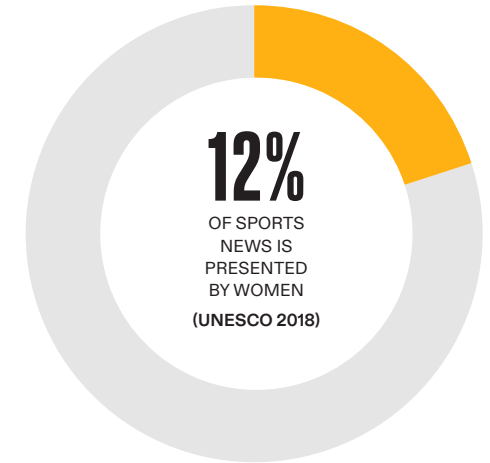
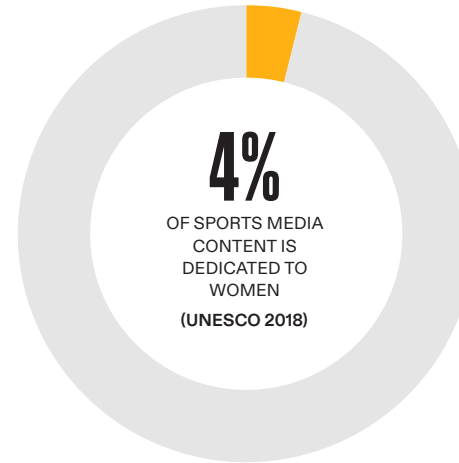
In sports coverage, there is a disproportionate focus on **sportswomen’s “off-court” characteristics** (physical appearance, clothing and personal lives), with the emphasis often placed on their looks ahead of their athleticism, sporting performance and abilities.

Women’s sport is generally given a qualifier, e.g women’s football, whereas men’s sport is not: simply football rather than men’s football. This

“**gender-marking**” specific to women’s sport implies that men’s sport is the norm (Cambridge University press 2016).

3. GENDER FOCUS FIRST

Sportswomen are more often than **not defined first by their gender** (women, female) or gender role (wife, mother, feminine), and then as an athlete, which is not the case when it comes to sportsmen (Cambridge University Press 2016). Male athletes are framed according to heterosexual “heroic masculine ideals” valorising strength, endurance and courage (Hanson 2012). Irrespective of gender or sexuality, and no matter what a person looks like, the primary focus should be on their **skills and achievements**.



In 2023, highest-earning female athlete: **Coco Gauff (USA) \$22.7M** and highest-earning male athlete **Cristiano Ronaldo (POR) \$275M**.

(SPORTICO 2024)



“Men aren't immune from comments about their physique, such as when wearing tight trunks, but women get it more and it's more important because of the history of inequality”.

Anna Watkins, British rower and double Olympic medallist, London 2012

REFRAME THE NARRATIVE

Being told that you **run like a man** or **throw like a girl**, that a certain sport **isn't appropriate because you're of a certain gender** or that you have either a **manly** or **girlish** figure... Derogatory comments such as these, and pressures to conform to feminine or masculine stereotypes and ideals, are harmful to those participating, and wanting to participate, in sport. They can ultimately lead to girls and boys abandoning sport entirely.

And yet sport can be a great driver of equality and inclusion, showcasing athletes and sportspeople in all their diversity from all walks of life excelling on the Olympic stage and at the highest levels of sport.

It's time to make sure that we flip and balance the script.

TO MOVE AWAY FROM THIS...



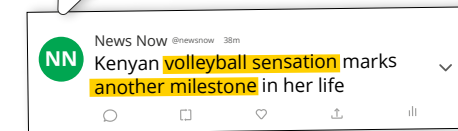
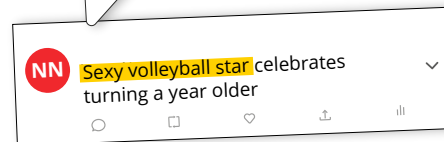
"They might as well be standing in the middle of the mall"

"The gymnasts rejoice in their victory after dominating the competition"



"The girls' cycling team"

"The women's cycling team"



"Ah, the chicks are crying"

"Lots of emotions for these medallists"

**...TOWARDS THIS,
A MORE BIAS-FREE AND
INCLUSIVE NARRATIVE.**

SPORT AS A DRIVER OF EQUALITY AND INCLUSION: A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

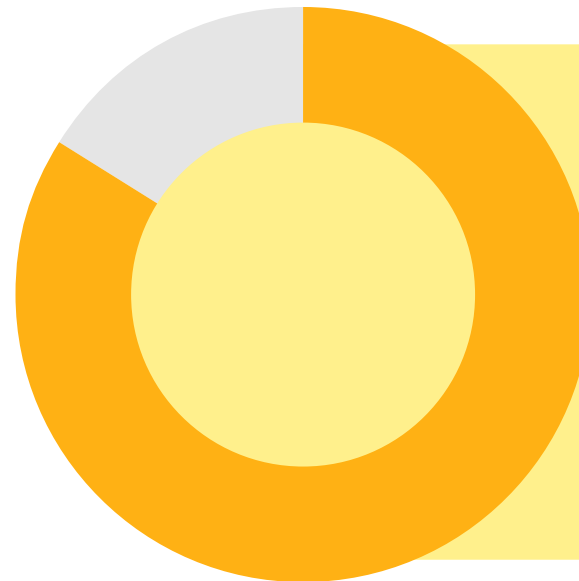
With the record participation of female athletes at the Olympic Games, and the acknowledged spotlight and increased visibility that comes with major sports events, there is a prime opportunity for sports organisations and leaders to call and strive for a more balanced and fair representation of all genders.

Sport is in a unique position:

- ✓ To help change the conversation and defy negative stereotypes and gender norms.
- ✓ To generate new strong, positive, and diverse role models.
- ✓ To promote and demand balanced coverage and a fair portrayal of sportspeople in all their diversity – irrespective of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or socio-economic status.

Diverse and empowering portrayals of athletes, coaches, officials and all those who make up the sports ecosystem have a positive impact on participation in sport, coaching and leadership. It is an opportunity to grow and tap into new audiences and generate more interest and engagement, in particular among younger generations who increasingly see sport as just that – sport.

Ensuring gender balance in portrayal is a small but incremental step on the path to gender equality, and a critical stepping stone to influence behaviours and change attitudes. Sport can ultimately model a culture that reflects equality, respect for diversity and inclusion, within and beyond sport.



84% OF SPORTS FANS (JUST OVER HALF OF WHOM WERE MEN) ARE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S SPORT

according to Nielsen research (2018) conducted in Australia, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, the UK and the USA. Women's sport is also seen as more "progressive" and "family-orientated", "cleaner" and more "inspiring" than men's sport.

"No Gambian has ever competed at the Winter Olympics. [...] Amadou Krubally saw me compete at the 2018 Winter Olympic Games for Ghana. He got inspired, reached out to me and started a winter sport federation for the Republic of Gambia. I felt so proud to see my fellow African break barriers and challenge the status quo."

Akwasi Frimpong, Ghana's first Olympic skeleton athlete, PyeongChang 2018

"A woman on the cover doing her sport and the focus on her face. She was the whole package. It was her body, her fierce determination. Right then I knew I wanted to go to the Olympics. I just had to go out and find a sport."

Jennifer Heil, Canadian Olympic moguls champion, Turin 2006, talking about seeing American heptathlete Jackie Joyner-Kersey on the cover of Sports Illustrated in the summer of 1992

REFERENCES

Akabas, L. 100 Highest- Paid Athletes in the World. Sportico.com, 9 Feb. 2024. [Online]. <https://www.sportico.com/feature/highest-paid-athletes-in-the-world-1234765608/>

Badenhausen, K. Highest- paid athletes in the world: Ronaldo scores \$275M in 2023. Sportico.com, 7 Feb. 2024. [Online]. <https://www.sportico.com/personalities/athletes/2024/highest-paid-athletes-in-the-world-2023-cristiano-ronaldo-1234765577/>

Bates, B. C. Is some Olympic commentary sexist? BBC News, 10 Aug. 2016. [Online]. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-37037050>

Butler, S. CBC Sports commits to gender-balanced coverage across all platforms. CBC, 6 Mar. 2020. [Online]. <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/iwd/cbc-sports-commits-to-gender-balanced-sports-coverage-1.5487976>

Cambridge University Press. Language, Gender and Sport. Part of the Cambridge Papers in ELT series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. [PDF]

Canadian Women & Sport. What is intersectionality? Canadian Women & Sport, 3 Dec. 2020. [Infographic]. <https://womenandsport.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/What-is-intersectionality-infographic-pdf.pdf>

Catalyst. Understanding Unconscious Bias: Ask Catalyst Express. Catalyst, 4 Oct. 2023. [Online]. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/unconscious-bias-resources/#:~:text=Dec%2012%2C%202019,our%20%20decision%2Dmaking%20and%20behavior>

European Institute for Gender Equality. Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication. EIGE, Nov. 2019. [PDF]. https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/toolkit-gender-sensitive-communication?language_content_entity=en

Fink, J.S. Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: have we really "come a long way, baby"? Sport Management Review, 18:3, 2013, pp. 331–42.

Frimpong, A. Akwasi Frimpong OLY on LinkedIn. LinkedIn, 21 Feb. 2021. [Post]. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/akwasi-frimpong-oly-38414b8_hopeofa-billion-ghanaonice-gambiaonice-activity-6769607728135598080-qy31?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Hanson, Valarie. The Inequality of Sport: Women < Men. The Review: A Journal of Undergraduate Student Research, vol 13, 2012, pp. 15-22. [Online]. <https://fisherpub.sjf.edu/ur/vol13/iss1/5/>

Nielsen. The Rise of Women's Sports. Nielsen, Oct. 2018. [PDF]. <https://www.nielsen.com/insights/2018/the-rise-of-womens-sports/>

OHCHR. Gender Stereotypes and Stereotyping and Women's Rights. United Nations Human Rights Office of the Commissioner, Sept. 2014. [PDF]. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Gender_stereotyping.pdf

Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport. Media Coverage & Female athletes. 2013. [Webpage]. <https://www.cehd.umn.edu/tucker-center/projects/mediacoverage.html>

UNESCO. Gender Equality in Sports Media. UNESCO, 24 July 2019. [Webpage]. <https://webarchive.unesco.org/web/20220625125044/https://en.unesco.org/themes/gender-equality-sports-media>

UN Women & Kantar. Are you ready for change? Gender equality attitudes survey 2019. UN Women, 2020. [PDF] <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Research-paper-Are-you-ready-for-change-Gender-equality-attitudes-study-2019-en.pdf>

UN Women Training Centre. Gender Equality Glossary. UN Women. [Webpage]. <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode&lang=en>

Women's Sports Foundation, et al. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women. Women's Sport Foundation, 2020. [PDF]. <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Chasing-Equity-Full-Report-Web.pdf>

2 THE PRACTICE

Adopting fair and balanced portrayal practices

This section includes a series of suggestions and tips to consider how to overcome bias across the various aspects of portrayal within the sporting context, and ensure we adopt gender-equal and fair-portrayal practices in all forms of communication and content output.

“In 2018 we were very encouraged by how the first edition of the Guidelines was received by our broadcasting colleagues covering the Olympic Games. We trust this third edition will further inform the media community so that fair and gender-balanced coverage becomes a cornerstone for us all.”

Yiannis Exarchos,
CEO, Olympic Broadcasting Services and
Executive Director, Olympic Channel

CONTENT AND EDITORIAL

- 1 Clear and balanced editorial direction and tone of content
- 2 Bold and compelling storytelling
- 3 Consistency is key

Clearly, it is not possible to anticipate gender representation in news and current events – you can’t give an account of something that hasn’t happened. All content needs to be based on **editorial merit**.

However, you can **strengthen your storytelling** around women’s sport and sportswomen to enhance visibility and consistency of coverage, introduce new voices and build a following. It is also possible – and necessary – to be **sensitive to gender in the way in which the content is packaged and presented**. When packaging editorial content, careful attention to gender portrayal should be factored into tone, style, language, framing and imagery.

Get creative and enrich your content with **highlights, documentaries, profile series or special features**. Whether it’s athletes to watch or lesser-known pioneers, lessons learned through overcoming adversity or comebacks from injury or illness, sporting tips or performance analysis and career progressions – there is a gold mine of incredible human stories waiting to be told. After all, a good story is a good story, irrespective of who the protagonist is.



TIP: CREATE A DATABASE

Develop a specific database for women in sport with contacts of female athletes, coaches, sports scientists, leaders and experts you can refer to as sources.

Women are more than their gender and men are more than just athletes. They are all people with full lives and diverse interests.

Track your editorial and image data on your digital platforms (websites and social media accounts) to **ensure diversity and gender balance in the number of articles, profiles and images published**.



TIP: REVIEW YOUR PLATFORMS

Ask yourself:

- How easy is it to find women’s sport updates and content on your platforms?
- Is this content accessible via your homepage in the same way as men’s sport?
- Is the content up to date and of equal quality to your men’s coverage?

Review your platforms and count how many clicks it takes/check how far down a user has to scroll to find content on women’s sport.

IMAGERY

Stories are told through images, whether still or moving. The way we use images must reflect the diversity that exists among sports, athletes and fans, but it must also factor in equality and balance – both in quality and in quantity.

At all times, keep these visual guidelines in mind:



✓ **Active, authentic and respectful visual imagery**
which portrays sportspeople in their environment.

✗ **Avoid passive, sexy imagery**
of sportspeople which reinforces stereotypes.

If an athlete, female or male, suffers a wardrobe malfunction or unfortunate incident around clothing (item of clothing that splits or tears or inadvertently reveals more of the body than intended), reframe the shot/image and/or delete it to respect the integrity of the athlete.



✓ **Athleticism and sporting prowess**
should be the focus of the imagery.

✗ **Do not focus unnecessarily on looks**
(e.g. make-up, hair, nails), clothing or intimate body parts (e.g. crotch shots, cleavage, backsides), especially if it does not relate to an athlete's performance.

In video coverage, avoid lingering “reveal” shots from head to toe. Think “sport appeal, not sex appeal”.



✓ **Give equal exposure**
to all the athletes in team sports as much as possible.

✗ **Do not focus too much or only on the same athlete**
within the team unless it links to sport and performance.



✓ **Capture diversity**
among sportspeople in terms of gender and other dimensions such as sport, ethnicity or age.

✗ **Ensure there are not significantly more images of one gender or community**
in relation to the other.



✓ **Balance strength, power and speed with gracefulness, agility, and elegance**
in athlete imagery.

✗ **Avoid reinforcing feminine and masculine stereotypes**
or focusing solely on “gender-appropriate” sports.

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words



TIP: CURATE A GENDER-BALANCED PHOTO GALLERY

Getty Images curated a ‘Best of Women’s Sports’ editorial and creative collection in partnership with the Women’s Sport Trust in the UK featuring the world’s top sportswomen in action. For more inspiration, visit: www.gettyimages.co.uk/resources/sportingwomen

LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Special attention should be paid to the use of language (expressions and communication) and terminology (vocabulary) in commentary, headlines or articles in print or digital.

Use **bias-free language** and avoid gender stereotypes, expressions or words that compare women to men and/or imply the superiority of one gender over another.

For example:

- She swam **“like a man/ beast”** to win that race.
- She swam **with determination** to win that race.
- She’s the next Michael Phelps.
- She’s an extraordinary athlete.
- It’s going to be a **“catfight”**.
- It’s going to be an **exciting contest** or It’s going to be a **tough battle** between two strong competitors.

If the gender identity of the person is known, then it is legitimate to refer to that individual’s gender (e. g. she/he, him/her, they/them). However, substitute gender-specific terminology for **gender-neutral descriptions** when a person’s gender is not known or in a mixed gender group.

For example:

- his/her their
- her/him them



LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Below is a list, by no means exhaustive, of some other general principles:

WHEN REFERRING TO PEOPLE

Always use “*female/male*”, **women/men** and not girls/boys, unless referring to minors.

The use of “*ladies*” is inappropriate when “*men*” is being used. The term should be **women**. The same applies for using the term “*girls*” when “*men*” is being used.

Ladies is appropriate when used with the term **Gentlemen**, as in a speech: “*Ladies and Gentlemen*”; or when it is an official title, e. g. “*Sir John and Lady Smith*”.

PRONOUNS

You should not assume a person’s gender identity. If necessary, ask them directly, and unless the gender of the person is known, avoid using gender-specific pronouns (she/he, him/her). Rather, in such cases, the plural (they/them/their) is acceptable. For example:

Each athlete must always have **his** accreditation on **him**.

Each athlete must always have their accreditation on them.

OR

All athletes are required to have their accreditation on them, at all times.

Similarly, when referring to a mixed-gender group, the neutral plural should be used.

NOUNS AND PROPER NAMES

Where possible, use gender-neutral terms, for example:

Sportsman
 Sportsperson / athlete
(or sportsman/ sportswoman when referring to a specific individual)

Anchorman
 Anchor

Spokesman
 Spokesperson

Cameraman / Cameramen
 Camera operator / Camera crew

Chairman
 Chair / Chairperson

Mankind
 Humankind / Humanity

Boyfriend/ girlfriend or husband/wife
 Partner / spouse

ADJECTIVES

Avoid making evaluative comments on an individual’s appearance. When describing an athlete’s performance, use adjectives that apply to both women and men. For instance:

use words such as: **one-to-one, powerful, strong, graceful, athletic, determined, dominant**

not gendered or sexist descriptions e.g. **sexy, girly, manly, like a man, effeminate, man-to-man, etc.**

TIP: FLIP THE GENDER
Swap the gender of the person you are talking or writing about. If the result seems strange, there may be a bias.

COVERAGE AND AIRTIME

The IOC believes **women’s and men’s events are of equal importance**, and this should be reflected in their treatment. It is therefore important to show and celebrate sporting journeys and achievements – irrespective of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation – with the same passion, respect and consistency throughout the year, and beyond Olympic cycles.



In broadcast activities – coverage of events, interviews, athlete profiles, commentary, etc. – ensure as much as possible that **equal airtime and coverage are devoted to women’s and men’s sport**. The intent is to balance both the duration and scheduling of the coverage.



When preparing articles and publications, both print and digital, as far as possible **women and men should be given equal exposure to ensure that the reporting is balanced** between the different genders. Avoid excessive focus on only one gender.



The quality (production) of women’s and men’s sports coverage and the presentation of athletes **should be equal**. Neither gender should be favoured.



Leverage any bargaining power you have when negotiating media rights for your sports events to **tie in coverage of women’s competitions and/or of female athletes** (or of the under-represented gender in your sport) to promote more balanced coverage.



TIP: WORK WITH MRH’S

Work closely with Media Rights-Holders to build a strong narrative around your sport and introduce your athletes in the lead-up to your major competitions.



Adapt your competition schedule to host women’s and men’s events closely together and/or change the times to **ensure women’s teams and female athletes are not an “opening act” or playing during “off hours”**.



TIP: MIX IT UP

The competition schedule plays a critical role in Media coverage of the Games as well as the communications produced by IFs, NOCs and the IOC. Since PyeongChang 2018, significant changes have been implemented to make the schedule gender-balanced. Progress continued for Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022 and as well as for Paris 2024. The schedule for both the Olympic and Winter Olympic Games is now far more balanced in terms of the number of medals awarded each day and the number of competition hours per day. This gives the opportunity for the women’s and men’s events to be reported on in a fair and balanced way whether for print, photography, online or broadcast. Paris 2024 marks a key advancement in how many sports- but not all yet - are scheduling the order of the events. They are now alternating between women and men events- not based on gender, but based on weight categories and sport disciplines.

INTERVIEWS AND COMMENTARY

When conducting interviews with athletes or their entourage, or commentating on the field of play, avoid gender-driven questions and statements.

For example: when interviewing a female athlete on the field of play, avoid asking about her husband/partner/children, unless she volunteers the information herself. Interviewers seldom ask male athletes whether their wives/partners/children are proud of them.



DON'T – Attribute success for a female athlete’s achievement to her coach/entourage (“here’s the man who made it all possible”). Credit for a male athlete’s success is seldom attributed to the coach/entourage.



DO – Do recognise that an athlete’s achievement is a team effort.



TIP: MIND YOUR TONE

Research has demonstrated that there is a “stark contrast between the exciting, amplified delivery of stories about men’s sports and the often dull, matter-of-fact delivery of women’s sports stories”. When commentating on sport or interviewing athletes, inject the same enthusiasm, interest and professionalism, irrespective of gender.



TIP: DIVERSIFY YOUR VOICES

Diversity is needed as much on screen as behind the screens and microphones, in the workforce, at all levels. Consider whether your pool of commentators, interviewers, journalists or producers represents a mix of genders and backgrounds.



TIP: MEDIA TRAINING FOR ATHLETES

Offer athletes media training opportunities to prepare them to be interviewed by the media. Via its Athlete365 platform, the IOC provides athletes with a personal brand toolkit to help them understand their self-portrayal and develop their personal brand: olympics.com/athlete365/personalbrand/

“As a woman, you start getting to a certain age and you’re asked – ‘when’s the baby coming?’ I’m not sure they’re asking Rafa Nadal that.”

Johanna Konta, British tennis player and Olympian at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020

“As a kid, I just felt like I didn't really have anyone to look up to that I felt like I could really relate to, someone that was out and gay and also competing in sports and finding success.”

Gus Kenworthy, American Olympic freestyle skier and slopestyle silver medallist, Sochi 2014

REFERENCES

Arapi, E. Reimagining Sport: Pathways to gender-balanced media coverage. European Broadcasting Union: Eurovision Sport, Feb. 2021. [PDF]. https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/strategic/open/Reimagining_Sport.pdf

Brewer, J. Skier Gus Kenworthy gives gay athletes something he didn't have: a role model. Washington Post, 11 Feb. 2018. [Online]. https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/olympics/skier-gus-kenworthy-gives-gay-athletes-something-he-didnt-have-a-role-model/2018/02/11/75ed7b08-0f52-11e8-9570-29c9830535e5_story.html

Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Musto, M. "It's Dude Time!": A Quarter Century of Excluding Women's Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows. Journal of Communication & Sport, 3:3, June 2015, pp. 261-287.

Council of Europe. Toolkit: how to make an impact on gender equality in sport – All you need to know. CoE, Sep. 2019. [PDF]. <https://rm.coe.int/all-in-toolkit-how-to-make-an-impact-on-gender-equality-in-sport-all-y/1680989ab2>

Getty Images. Guidelines for Women & Girls in Sport. Getty Images, 2022. [PDF]. <https://engage.gettyimages.com/guidelines-for-women-in-sport>

International Olympic Committee. Applying a gender lens to ensure that men's and women's sports have equal visibility at Paris 2024. Olympics.com, 12 Mar. 2024. [Online]. <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/applying-a-gender-lens-to-ensure-that-men-s-and-women-s-sports-have-equal-visibility-at-paris-2024>

International Olympic Committee. Tokyo 2020: a new blueprint for the Olympic competition schedule and the visibility of women's sport. Olympics.com, 25 July 2021. [Online]. <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/tokyo-2020-a-new-blueprint-for-the-olympic-competition-schedule-and-the-visibility-of-women-s-sport>

McElwee, M. Johanna Konta exclusive: 'When's the baby coming? No one's asking Rafael Nadal that'. The Telegraph, 26 Jan. 2022. [Online]. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tennis/2022/01/26/johanna-konta-baby-coming-no-ones-asking-rafa-nadal/>

Miller, M. How the IOC's content is reflecting its gender parity at Paris 2024. Broadcast: Broadcastnow.co.uk, 26 Mar. 2024. [Online]. <https://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/production/how-the-iocs-content-is-reflecting-its-gender-parity-at-paris-2024/5191933.article>

Parlour, T. The Ambition Project: Creating a bold, unapologetic and independently successful women's sport ecosystem. Women's Sport Trust, Dec. 2020. [PDF]

Springer, S. 7 Ways to Improve Coverage of Women's Sports. Nieman Reports, 20 May 2022. [Online]. <https://niemanreports.org/articles/covering-womens-sports/>

UNESCO. Gender-sensitive indicators for media: framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content. UNESCO, 2012. [PDF]. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217831>

UN Women. Gender-inclusive language guidelines: Promoting gender equality through the use of language. UN Women, Nov. 2022. [PDF]. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Gender%20Inclusive%20Language%20Guidelines.pdf>

Women's Sport Trust. Getty Images Partners with Women's Sport Trust to Redefine Imagery of Female Athletes in Commercial and Editorial Storytelling. Womens Sport Trust, 25 Jan. 2021. [Online]. <https://www.womenssporttrust.com/getty-images-partners-with-womens-sport-trust-to-redefine-imagery-of-female-athletes-in-commercial-and-editorial-storytelling/>

3 TAKING ACTION

Checklists to facilitate implementation

Sport can be a great driver of equality and inclusion, showcasing athletes and sportspeople from all walks of life excelling on the Olympic stage and at the highest levels of sport. As leaders, communicators and content creators in sport, we are in a unique position to set the tone and help change the conversation and defy negative stereotypes. To generate new strong, positive and different role models. To promote **balanced coverage** – both in quantity and quality – **and fair and inclusive portrayal of sportspeople in all their diversity.**

“They’re the same gestures, the same medals, the same emotions; it’s the same desire to win, the same pride, the same power to inspire all those watching. It’s not women’s sport; it’s sport.”

Tony Estanguet,
President, Organising Committee
for the Olympic Games Paris 2024


PORTRAYAL IN SPORT CHECKLIST

The IOC believes **women’s and men’s events are of equal importance**, and this should be reflected in their treatment. It’s therefore important to show and celebrate sporting journeys and achievements – irrespective of gender, race, religion or sexual orientation – with the same passion, respect and consistency throughout the year, and beyond Olympic cycles.

Remember:
It's as much **who** you show or write/talk about as **how** you show them or write/talk about them.

Check your content

Equal editorial attention, where possible




Ask yourself:

- Are there considerably more stories and profiles of one gender over another?
- How are you framing your questions and storytelling? Consider if they are gender-driven or sport-driven.
- Are you packaging your content and presenting women’s and men’s sport with the same enthusiasm and quality?

Check your imagery

Be balanced and steer away from gender stereotypes




Ask yourself:

- Is there a gender balance across the images being used?
- Are women represented in an active and empowered position, and equally visible and prominent?
- Is the focus of the images on performance and sport instead of aesthetics?

Check your words

Use neutral language that can be used for all individuals and groups of individuals




Ask yourself:

- Are you using masculine forms (he/him) in generic references, i.e. when referring to an unspecified group of people? Or being gender-neutral (they/them)?
- Are you using descriptive words and expressions that can apply to anyone?
- Are you comparing genders, or implying the superiority of one gender over another?

Check your ‘voices’

Diversify your storytellers and propose gender-balanced and diverse panels, spokespeople, trainers, role models, etc.



Ask yourself:

- What voices are being heard and in what capacity (e.g. as an authority or expert)?
- Are women and minority voices speaking for themselves?
- Are your storytellers from different genders and backgrounds?

ASK THE ATHLETE

Just as you would doublecheck the spelling and pronunciation of a sportsperson’s name, respectfully ask them for their pronouns. Don’t assume.

HOW SPORTS ORGANISATIONS CAN FACILITATE GENDER-BALANCED COVERAGE

There are several initiatives a sports organisation can undertake to facilitate gender-balanced coverage. Here are a few suggestions:

1 Ensure the competition schedule is equally balanced for women’s and men’s events.
 For example:

- Alternate the women’s and men’s finals between the last and second-last event of the competition.
- Ensure events are equally scheduled to prevent one gender competing in time slots where TV coverage is limited or non-existent.
- Make sure women’s and men’s events are equally sequenced to avoid women’s events being reflected as the opening act for the main events later in the day.

2 Negotiate broadcasting rights agreements so that women’s and men’s competitions have equal coverage and guarantees for equal broadcast programming.
 For example:

- Include a clause which prevents rights-holders from producing 30-minute highlight packages of the women’s game while the men’s game is given full live, two-hour coverage.

3 Stipulate in host event contracts that women’s and men’s host broadcaster coverage must be of equal quantity and quality.
 For example:

- Same number of hours and same number of cameras and amount of specialised equipment.

4 If your organisation hires the host broadcaster directly, include the clause noted in point 3 above. Also include an expectation for a staffing plan in their bid proposal which sees key roles also being assigned to women (producers, directors, camera operators and on-air talent) and include that plan in the final contract.

5 Organise women’s and men’s competitions so that they occur at the same location and in the same time frame. Note, this makes it cost-effective for media outlets to assign reporting coverage.

6 Ensure female athletes and female coaches are put forward as potential interviewees.

7 Create opportunities for media outlets to assign female staff.
 For example:

- Offer additional accreditations for key positions such as producer, director, camera operator, editor or photographer.

8 To underscore that gender-balanced portrayal is a priority, invite a media outlet to conduct a joint content analysis of their coverage and your organisation’s coverage of an event. Engage a university journalism department to conduct the analysis, then meet with the media outlet staff to discuss.

9 Promote your organisation’s portrayal guidelines to the accredited media, asking for feedback on the content and requesting distribution to their staff.

10 Ensure your organisation’s policies and sports rules are free of gender bias to avoid fostering the myth that women’s sport is inferior or second class.

TRACKING YOUR OUTPUT

Knowing who is being promoted as role models and what is being said and published on your platforms is critical if you want to ensure balanced portrayal in your sports communication and coverage. Having factual data allows you to shift attitudes, behaviours and performance.

A gender audit of your content output and creators will help to set the benchmark and raise awareness on how balanced, or biased, your teams and coverage are. Tracking your output also helps to monitor progress and define concrete actions to drive change if and where needed within your team and organisation.

GOAL
 For teams and leaders to integrate gender representation considerations across all editorial plans and content being produced and published to ensure a balanced output – both in proportion and in type of coverage.

This section provides some tips on what to measure and how to start tracking your output systematically to collect the data.

WHAT TO TRACK?

Visibility: Measure **who features in the content** you publish. For example:

- ✓ Measure the gender balance of your stories across your different outputs; so how many stories feature women, men, or both as subjects and sources.
- ✓ Measure the gender balance of the images you post on your channels; so is the image's focus on a woman, man, mixed or other (e.g. venues, city, crowds, equipment, etc.)? Count only who the focus in the image is, and if that person's gender is clearly identifiable.
- ✓ Measure the gender balance in the videos you produce; so how many of the speakers are women and how many are men. To go a step further, measure whether they speak for the same length of time.
- ✓ Measure the gender balance of your social media live streams with athletes; so how many live streams do you do with female athletes, male athletes or both together.
- ✓ Count who is being quoted as "experts" and "leaders" in your content; so how many female voices vs. male voices.

Note: If a person is featured twice within the same piece of content, count them only once. Count all original content you produce and control, including reposts which contribute to the tone of your content feed and reflect the organisation's values.

Narrative: Measure the type of coverage and **how individuals are portrayed in the content** you commission and/or publish on your channels.

- ✓ Categorise the type of content by subject, gender and narrative, for example: Performance (results, in action) / Pride (national treasure, hero) / Success / Failure / Personal (journey, life balance) or Lifestyle / Human interest / News / Performance.
- ✓ Take it a step further and identify how the story portrays the person in the content, e.g. as a leader, as a participant, as an expert, as a source or as a role model, and how prominently the subject features on your channel, e.g. website homepage, social banner, marketing materials, social feed, thematic section, etc.
- ✓ Evaluate the emotional composition of your images; so is the imagery action-dominated (competing, training, etc.), emotionally based (moments of elation and devastation), success-centred (on a podium, pictured with medals) or objectified (athlete driven or unintentional)?
- ✓ Evaluate the language used, so is gendered or diminutive language being used to refer to or describe an athlete?

Note: Develop a coding scheme to evaluate each content item against the same criteria.


Share of voice: Measure **who you put forward as representatives of your sport/organisation.**


- ✓ Measure the gender balance of your experts, spokespeople and press attachés. Draw up a list and, if you find there is a significant gender gap, activate your network and research additional sources you can add to balance your list.


Storytellers: Measure **who creates the content** you commission and/or publish on your channels.

- ✓ Measure the gender balance of your content production teams and ask the agencies you've commissioned to produce content for you to list the gender balance of their teams. If you find there is a significant gender gap, seek out new voices and diversify your storytellers to enjoy different perspectives.

HOW TO TRACK?

- 

Create an ongoing tagging and tracking system for gender balance in coverage – this can be done using a content management application or an Excel spreadsheet.
- 

Tag, count and record your figures in your tracking spreadsheet or content management tool as the content is being created and published, or very soon after.
- 

Share the data in weekly or monthly editorial and staff meetings to evaluate progress, share success and adjust plans to address any gaps as needed. Establish a cadence which works for you and your team.

The purpose of collecting this data is to increase and balance both the quantity and quality of sportspeople’s representation in your content to reflect the diversity of the world we live in and ensure these positive role models can be visible not just during the Olympic cycles, but also on a daily basis

“There is now a need for action, not pledges. You have really got to do and deliver, taking representation seriously and making sure that it is considered in all aspects of what you do. And, of course, continue the ongoing battle to stamp out bias.”

Barbara Slater, BBC Sport Director, IOC GEDI Commission and IOC Press Committee member

Examples

50:50 THE EQUALITY PROJECT

In 2018, the BBC launched the 50:50 Equality Project to inspire and support content-makers to represent women and men equally across its channels and ensure its content truly reflects the diversity of its audience. It set out three core principles:

1. **Collect data to drive change**
2. **Measure what you control**
3. **Don’t compromise on quality**

As part of this challenge, BBC Sport launched a campaign in 2019 called #ChangetheGame to change the perception of women’s sport and showcase sportswomen across BBC outlets. It rallied the whole organisation behind this campaign, which had a huge impact, with more than 45 million people consuming women’s sport content across BBC platforms in 2019.

To learn more about the methodology and results or to get involved, visit: www.bbc.com/5050

NZOC & ISENTIA: A GENDER ANALYSIS OF NEW ZEALAND MEDIA COVERAGE

In 2015, the New Zealand Olympic Committee commissioned media intelligence company ISENTIA to examine how New Zealand female athletes were covered in the media in the build-up to, during and after the Rio 2016 Olympics. Using content analysis and a wide data set, this project examined nearly 30,000 mentions of individual athletes across print, broadcast and online news over a 14-month period. The analysis focused on imagery, narrative and the language associated with athletes, examining these factors in reporting on male athletes compared to female athletes.

To learn more about the project and access the report, visit: www.isentia.com/latest-reads/nzoc-rio-2016/

Following on from this report, Sport NZ and ISENTIA are conducting a major study of gender balance that goes beyond the Olympic Games. The first study involved an analysis of 40,000 media stories a year for two years starting in July 2019.

For more information, visit: sportnz.org.nz/mediaanalysis/about/

REFERENCES

Abbott, A. Female athletes and Rio 2016. A gender analysis of New Zealand media coverage. Isentia Insights & New Zealand Olympic Committee, Dec. 2016. [PDF]. https://library.olympics.com/Default/doc/SYRACUSE/184850/female-athletes-and-rio-2016-a-gender-analysis-of-new-zealand-media-coverage-ashley-abbott?_lg=en-GB

BBC. How it works – 50:50, The Equality Project. BBC, 2020. [Webpage]. <https://www.bbc.com/5050/methodology/>

Council of Europe. Toolkit: how to make an impact on gender equality in sport – All you need to know. CoE, Sep. 2019. [PDF]. <https://rm.coe.int/all-in-toolkit-how-to-make-an-impact-on-gender-equality-in-sport-all-y/1680989ab2>

Focal Points for Women and Gender, Department of Public Information. Gender Checklist for Content Creators. United Nations, 2018. [PDF]. https://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org.gender/files/dpi_gender_checklist_for_content_creation_2018.pdf

Isentia & Sport New Zealand. Media and Gender: gender balance across sports media coverage in Aotearoa New Zealand, July 2019 – December 2020. Sport New Zealand, April 2021. [PDF]. <https://sportnz.org.nz/media/3883/gender-and-media-april-2021.pdf>

SeeHer. #SeeHer in Sports Best Practices -- SeeHer Marketing Essentials Toolkit™. SeeHer, Oct. 2020. [Document]

Women's Sport Leadership Academy. Located at the University of Chichester (England), and New Zealand.

ANNEX

Fair, inclusive, and non-discriminatory portrayal of transgender sportspeople and athletes with sex variations

Every person, irrespective of their gender identity or sex variations, has the right to practice sport without discrimination and in a way that respects their health, safety and dignity. These principle of fairness, inclusion, non-discrimination, and harm prevention — as reinforced in the [IOC Framework on Fairness, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations](#) released in November 2021 – also apply when it comes to how we engage with and portray transgender and non-binary participants in sports and athletes with sex variations.

This annex offers some key definitions, language practices and considerations to promote a more accurate, responsible, respectful, and inclusive coverage and communication of these communities.

“It’s really difficult when you don’t see people like yourself in the media or even around you or in your profession. I was operating in the space of being a professional footballer and I wasn’t seeing people like me. I think being visible is huge and it’s something that helped me when I was trying to figure out my identity.”

Quinn,
Canadian footballer, and Tokyo 2020
Olympic gold medallist
Source: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/58061475>

TERMS TO KNOW

Understanding specific key concepts and inclusive terminologies.

SEX VARIATIONS: An umbrella term that refers to variations in one’s sex-linked characteristics (e.g. chromosomes, hormones, internal organs) that do not fit medical and social norms for female and male bodies. For example, in women these variations can result in higher-than-average levels of naturally occurring testosterone.

TRANSGENDER: An umbrella term that refers to a person who knows their gender identity to be different from the one that was registered for them at birth. For example, a transgender woman is someone who was assigned the category male when born, but who is a transgender female, and transitions to live her daily life as a woman.

GENDER-AFFIRMING MEDICAL CARE: Refers to the medical care that a transgender individual may access as part of bringing their body into alignment with their identity. This may include gender-affirming hormone therapy and/or gender confirmation surgeries. Not all transgender people pursue medical steps as part of their transition experience.

CISGENDER: Someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex that was registered for them at birth. A cisgender man was assigned male at birth; a cisgender woman was assigned female at birth.

NON-BINARY: An umbrella term and adjective used by people whose gender identities are outside the binary categories of “woman” and “man.” A person can be neither, both or their gender may be fluid i.e. changeable over time. While the IOC Framework does not refer specifically to non-binary athletes, an increasing number of people in sport settings identify as non-binary.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer.” The plus denotes inclusion of any other sexual orientations, gender identities, and/or sex characteristics that depart from heterosexual, cisgender, and/or binary (female/male) norms.

PRONOUNS: Words used to refer to individuals in terms of their gender when not using their name e.g. she/her or he/him. Non-binary people may use gender-neutral pronouns such as ‘they’ and ‘them’.



OTHER TERMS YOU MIGHT HAVE SEEN

INTERSEX: An identity term used by many people with natural variations in their sex-linked characteristics. The term “intersex” is also used in many clinical settings. Not all people with sex variations identify as intersex. For this reason, the IOC Framework refers to athletes with sex variations, or women with sex variations, as opposed to intersex athletes or intersex women.

DIFFERENCE OF SEX DEVELOPMENT (DSD): The medical community often refers to people with natural sex variations as having ‘differences of sex development’, which is an adaptation of ‘disorders of sex development’– an older term that is now debated, given such variations occur naturally and typically have no negative health consequences.

HYPERANDROGENISM: This term, which refers to higher-than-average levels of naturally occurring testosterone, can be experienced as stigmatizing because of how it has been used to pathologize people with sex variations. Instead, simply refer to “athletes with naturally high testosterone levels.”

PROBLEMATIC LANGUAGE

There are many common language difficulties when reporting on or writing about trans people and athletes with sex variations. Below are some of the most common missteps and harmful language practices to avoid.

TERMS TO AVOID: “born male”, “born female”, “biologically male”, “biologically female”, “genetically male”, “genetically female”, “male-to-female (MtF)”, “female-to-male” (FtM)

Use of phrases like those above can be dehumanising and inaccurate when used to describe transgender sportspeople and athletes with sex variations. A person’s sex category is not assigned based on genetics alone and aspects of a person’s biology can be altered when they pursue gender-affirming medical care.

INSTEAD USE: *girl/boy, woman/man, transgender girl/boy, transgender woman/man, transgender person*

It is always preferable to emphasise a person’s actual gender rather than potentially calling their identity into question by referring to the sex category that was registered on their original birth certificate. If there is a clear reason to refer to the category a person was assigned at birth, the terms to use are: “assigned female at birth”, “assigned male at birth”, or “designated female at birth”, “designated male at birth”.

ADDITIONAL WORDING TO AVOID

“IDENTIFIES AS”: Avoid saying that transgender people “identify as” their gender. That implies that gender identity is a choice. Gender identity applies to transgender people in the same way that it applies to any person. If it needs to be specified, simply state: “Alexia is a woman who is transgender.”

“HE/SHE IS A TRANSGENDER” OR “THE TRANSGENDERS”: The term “transgender” is an adjective, not a noun. Instead, refer to being transgender, or refer to a person who is transgender, or the transgender community.

“SEX CHANGE” OR “POST-OPERATIVE/SURGERY”: Medical steps may be part of an individual’s transition experience, but they are not required for a transgender person to be socially and legally recognised and live as their authentic self. Some trans people may have surgery, some may not.

“TRANSSEXUAL”: An older term originally used in medical settings that became a derogatory term over time. Some people within the trans community may still call themselves transsexual. Do not use transsexual to describe a person unless they prefer to use the term to describe themselves.

Note: This section is informed by GLAAD’s Media Reference Guide and its guides on Covering LGBTQ athletes at the Olympics and Paralympics.


RESPECTING DIFFERENCE: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

The Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 saw the participation of openly transgender and non-binary athletes for the first time. Additionally, in the past few years, there have been several instances of athletes with sex variations making media headlines. Reporting on, communicating about, and interviewing trans and non-binary people in sport and athletes with sex variations requires care and responsibility to prevent any kind of discrimination.



Below are some general good practices to be mindful of when covering and/or engaging with transgender participants in sport and athletes with sex variations:

- ✓ Appropriate terminology is fundamental to respectful coverage. That includes, for instance, the use of **correct name, pronouns and/or terms** as well as appropriate imagery.
- ✓ **If necessary, ask** the person what pronouns they use and how they identify/ describe themselves, in order to respect their self-determined identification.



TIP FOR NOCS, IFS & NFS:
Update databases, documents (such as team lists, employment records, athlete biographies etc.) and other correspondence to reflect the person's correct name and pronouns.


- ✓ It is important to recognise and engage with trans people in sport and athletes with sex variations **for their roles in sport** and not their gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or medical history. In this context, like all athletes, coaches, and officials, they are sportspeople.

- ✓ **Respecting a person's privacy** includes letting them choose for themselves what information or experience they are comfortable sharing. Medical matters should only be brought into the conversation if volunteered by the person and included in a story if they have first provided their **consent**.
- ✓ **Centre the voices and experiences** of trans people in sport and athletes with sex variations in your communication or coverage, as much as possible.
- ✓ Seek knowledge on these topics and **engage with representatives** from the relevant communities to inform and/or assist with your reporting or communication.

- ✘ **Never make assumptions or speculate** about a person’s identity, sexuality or sex characteristics based on their appearance, name, or any other factor.
- ✘ **Avoid outdated, problematic and potentially harmful language practices,** terms, and images which perpetuate stigma, stereotypes, or sensationalism. For example, avoid **deadnaming** (referring to a person’s name by which they were previously known but no longer uses) or **misgendering** (referring to a person – especially a transgender person – using an incorrect gender).

See section “problematic language” for more examples.
- ✘ **Avoid focusing on a person’s body or medical history** and asking intrusive questions, for example about what medical steps they have undertaken to affirm their gender.

- ✘ **Never out an athlete nor share their story without their permission.** Information on gender identities, sexual orientation and sex variations are deeply personal. Not every trans person or athlete with sex variations is willing nor ready to publicly share their story. Keep in mind that inadvertently outing an athlete could have severe ramifications for their personal and professional life.
- ✘ **Do not ignore the person’s sporting story or athlete’s experience** (i.e. their performance, sport, training, schedule, team, etc.) to solely focus on their experience as a transgender athlete or athlete with sex variations.
- ✘ **Do not confuse having sex variations with being transgender.** People with sex variations are assigned a sex category at birth - usually female or male - by medical providers and have typically lived their lives as women or men. Like all people, some may identify as trans, others do not.

 **TIP: PREVENTING ONLINE ABUSE**
Consider working with a cyber-safety, data and/or content moderation software or company who can help with protecting athletes, coaches and officials from online hate and abuse.



REFERENCES

Arapi, E. Reimagining Sport: Pathways to gender-balanced media coverage. European Broadcasting Union: Eurovision Sport, Feb. 2021. [PDF]. https://www.ebu.ch/files/live/sites/ebu/files/Publications/strategic/open/Reimagining_Sport.pdf

Athlete Ally & Out in Athletics. FAQ: LGBTQA+/ Transgender & Gender Expansive Policies. 2019. [PDF]. <https://www.athleteally.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OIA-x-AA-FAQ-v6.pdf>

Catalyst. LGBTQ+ Glossary of Terms. 2021. [PDF]. https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/lgbt_terms_to_know.pdf

Dallara, A, et al. FACT SHEET: Reporter guide to covering transgender people, topics, and legislation. GLAAD, 2 May 2023. [Online]. <https://glaad.org/fact-sheet-evidence-based-health-care-transgender-people-and-youth/>

Getty Images & GLAAD. LGBTQ+ Guidebook for Inclusive Visual Storytelling: Helpful Practice to improve representation. Getty Images, 2021. [PDF]. <https://www.gettyimages.ch/LGBTQGuide>

GLAAD. Covering LGBTQ Athletes at the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics. GLAAD, 2021. [PDF]. <https://glaad.org/glaad-athlete-ally-and-pride-house-tokyo-release-media-guide-covering-lgbtq-athletes-2020/>

GLAAD. Covering LGBTQ Athletes at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics: A Guide for Media. GLAAD, 2022. [PDF]. <https://glaad.org/covering-lgbtq-athletes-2022-beijing-winter-olympics-and-paralympics-guide-media/>

Human Rights Campaign. Glossary of Terms. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

interACT. Media Guide: Covering the Intersex community. interACT, 2017. [PDF]. interactadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/INTERSEX-MEDIAGUIDE-interACT.pdf

International Olympic Committee. P&G champions LGBTQ+ athletes at Tokyo 2020. Olympics.com, 3 Aug. 2021. [Online]. <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/p-g-champions-lgbtq-athletes-at-tokyo-2020>

Ninan, S. “Love is a human right”: India sprinter Dutee Chand tells her coming out story. ESPN.com, 11 Oct. 2021. [Online]. https://www.espn.com/olympics/story/_/id/32303155/india-sprinter-dutee-chand-tells-coming-story

Organisation Intersex International Europe - OII Europe. Intersex and Sports. OII Europe, 30 Nov. 2023. [Webpage]. <https://www.oii-europe.org/intersex-and-sports/>

Out & Equal. Guía de Comunicación Inclusiva para la Inclusión Laboral de Personas Trans y No Binarias. [PDF]. <https://outandequal.org/spanish-inclusion/>

Scovel, S., Nelson, M., & Thorpe, H. Media Framings of the Transgender Athlete as “Legitimate Controversy”: The Case of Laurel Hubbard at the Tokyo Olympics. Journal of Communication & Sport, 11:5, Aug. 2022, pp. 838-853. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479522116884>

Sports Media LGBT+. Rainbow Ready – Resources for Communicating LGBT+ Inclusion in Sport: Strategy and media guidelines. sportsmedialgbt.com, 2019. [PDF]. <https://sportsmedialgbt.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/RainbowReady.pdf>

Stonewall. Why do we need the Rainbow Laces campaign? Stonewall, 19 Sept. 2023. [Online]. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/why-do-we-need-rainbow-laces-campaign>

The Trevor Project. The Well-Being of LGBTQ Youth Athletes. The Trevor Project, 23 Aug. 2023. [Online]. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/the-well-being-of-lgbtq-youth-athletes/>

Thorpe, H., Nelson, M., Scovel, S., & Veale, J.F. (2023). Journalists on a Journey: Towards Responsible Media on Transgender Participation in Sport. Journalism Studies, 24:9, 2023, pp.1237-1255. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2023.2206920>

Trans Journalists Association. Stylebook and Coverage Guide. Trans Journalists Association, 15 Aug. 2023. [Online]. <https://styleguide.transjournalists.org/>

Ward, T. Equal Play: Transgender athletes talk fitness & fairness. Men’s Health, 25 Nov. 2021. [Magazine]. <https://www.menshealth.com/uk/fitness/a38351950/transgender-athletes/>

Worthing-Davies, M., & Jacques, J. Guidance for Football Governing Bodies on LGBT Inclusion and the Prevention of Discrimination and Violence. European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF), 2013. [PDF]. http://www.prideinsport.info/wp-content/uploads/pridein-sport-football_guidance.pdf

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SPORT

IOC Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives 2021 – 2024

Sport for Generation Equality Framework

Driving implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action through the power of the sports ecosystem

Council of Europe ALL IN: Towards gender balance in sport

Toolkit: How to make an impact on gender equality in sport

Canadian Women & Sport: How to apply a Gender LENS to decision-making

GENDER

UN Guidelines for gender-inclusive language

UN Women Gender Equality glossary

EIGE Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Communication

SPORT MEDIA

Reimagining sport pathways to gender-balanced media coverage (2021)

Eurovision Sport handbook to address on-screen coverage, the under-representation of women in sports broadcasting and the portrayal of female athletes in the media

Improving the Media Coverage of our Sportswomen (2018)

New Zealand Women’s Sport Leadership Academy (WSLA) Report

GLAAD, Athlete Ally and Pride House Tokyo 2020 guide to Covering LGBTQ Athletes at the Olympics and Paralympics (2021)

UNESCO gender-sensitive indicators for media

Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content

Guiding Principles for the Inclusion of Transgender People in Community Sport (2022)

Sport New Zealand.

Media Guide: A guide to reporting on LGBTIQ+ people at the Commonwealth Games.

Pride House Birmingham 2022.

Contributors:

Madeleine Pape OLY PhD (she/her), Gender & Inclusion Specialist

Nadia Bonjour (she/her), IOC Gender Equality & Inclusion Advisor and Portrayal Specialist

Nancy Lee, IOC Gender Equality Advisor and former Head of Sport at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

The Portrayal Guidelines have been developed by the IOC Gender Equality Unit in the IOC's Corporate and Sustainable Development Department, with the support and collaboration of Athlete Communication, Corporate Communications and Public Affairs, Olympic Games Media Operations, IOC TMS, Olympic Channel Services, and Olympic Broadcasting Services. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Contact us:

genderequality@olympic.org

The Olympic rings, typography, pictograms, photographs and other assets featured in these guidelines are the property of the International Olympic Committee, all rights reserved.

© 2024 International Olympic Committee.
All rights reserved.

Production: Twelfthman

Photography: IOC; Getty Images®; front cover IOC/ Dan Mullan; IOC/ Friedemann Vogel; IOC/Dan Mullan; Mark Kolbe via Getty Images; Clive Brunskill via Getty Images; IOC/ Mine Kasapoglu, IOC/ John Huet, IOC/ Chris Graythen; Cameron Spencer via Getty Images; Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee of the Olympic Games; IOC/ David Burnett; IOC/ John Huet; IOC/ Matthew King; IOC/ Jason Evans; internal IOC/ Dan Mullan; IOC/ Jason Evans; IOC/ John Huet; IOC/ Mine Kasapoglu; IOC/ Mine Kasapoglu; IOC/ Jason Evans; IOC/ Nelson Chavez; IOC/ Kishimoto; IOC/ Matthew Stockman