



# Women in the Olympic Movement

## Olympic and Paralympic history

### The ancient Olympics

The ancient Olympic Games began in 776 BCE and were held for over 1,000 years until 393 CE. The Games began as part of a religious gathering that honoured the gods and goddesses of Greek mythology.

Only boys and men were allowed to compete, and married women were not allowed to attend. Women took part in separate Games, the Heraia, in honour of the goddess of the hearth and home.

### The modern Olympics

Baron Pierre de Coubertin was the founder of the modern Olympic Games in 1896. Although he claimed that women were not welcome in the Olympic movement, just four years later, in 1900, 12 women took part in tennis and golf. The first woman to win an Olympic gold medal was Charlotte Cooper, a British tennis player, in 1900.

In 1920, 60 women competed out of 2,692 competitors. The inclusion of women's track 800 metres at the 1928 Games was controversial as a number of women collapsed at the finish line. Lina Radke won the race, but the event was then declared dangerous for women and banned from the Olympics. It wasn't reintroduced until 1960. By the 1948 London Olympics, women took part in 19 events across five different sports.

In the 1988 Games, 42 of the 160 countries competing didn't have any female athletes. In Sydney 2000, the number of teams without female competitors decreased to 9 (2 African, 6 Asian and 1 American).

In Sydney 2000, women were still prevented from taking part in events such as baseball, boxing and wrestling. In that year Brigit Fischer earned two gold medals in kayak to become the first woman in any sport to win medals 20 years apart (in 1980 and 2000).

In Athens 2004, 41% of the athletes were women. Women could compete in 26 sports and 137 of a possible 302 events (45% of the total). Women participated in Olympic wrestling for the first time.

In Torino 2006, 38% of the athletes were women, and they could take part in 48% of the events.<sup>1</sup> Women still did not compete in ski jumping, Nordic combined, four-person bobsled or doubles luge.

In Beijing, 42% of the athletes were women. Women could compete in 26 out of 28 sports and 137 of a possible 302 events (45% of total). Women could not compete in boxing or baseball.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Women in the 2006 Olympic and Paralympic Games: An analysis of Participation, Leadership and Media Coverage.

<sup>2</sup> [www.olympic.org.uk](http://www.olympic.org.uk)

**Table 1:** The introduction of women's sports on the Olympic programme, 1900-2008

Year	Sport
1900	Tennis, golf
1904	Archery
1908	Tennis
1912	Swimming
1924	Fencing, ice skating
1928	Athletics, gymnastics by teams
1936	Skiing
1948	Canoeing
1952	Equestrian
1960	Speed skating
1964	Volleyball, luge
1972	Archery
1976	Rowing, basketball, handball
1980	Hockey
1984	Shooting, cycling
1988	Tennis, table tennis, yachting
1992	Badminton, judo, biathlon
1996	Football, softball
1998	Curling, ice hockey
2000	Weightlifting, pentathlon, taekwondo, triathlon
2002	Bobsleigh
2004	Wrestling
2008	3,000m steeplechase, BMX

Note: Some events have been mentioned more than once, eg. tennis and archery. This is because they were removed from the Olympic programme and then reintroduced later.

Source: The promotion of Women in the Olympic Movement: IOC Policy and Initiatives. Dept. of International Cooperation, May, 2006.

## The Paralympic Movement

The Modern Paralympics were first held in 1960 in Rome. At the 2000 Paralympic Games, there were 18 competition sports, 4,000 athletes and 2,000 coaches from 125 different countries. 80 out of the 125 countries entered women in the Games, representing an increase of 31 countries since 1996, and the total number of female athletes rose by nearly 35% over the previous Games (Paralympian online, 2000). Sailing and rugby were included for the first time but fewer events were open to women in the Paralympic Games than in the non-disabled Olympic Games.

In Athens 2004, a total of 1,160 women (31% of the total number of athletes) competed at the Games, with female athletes competing in judo and volleyball (sitting) for the first time.

In the Torino 2006 Paralympic Winter Games, women made up 21% of the total athletes (99 women, 375 men) and they participated in 48.3% of all sports and 48.3% of all medal events. They did not participate in ice sledge hockey.

**Table 2:** Women's participation in the Olympic Games, 1900-2008

Year	Games of the Olympiad			Olympic Winter Games		
	Total events	Women's events	%	Total events	Women's events**	%
1900	86	3*	3.5	-	-	-
1904	89	3	3.3	-	-	-
1908	107	3	2.8	-	-	-
1912	102	6	5.9	-	-	-
1920	152	6	3.9	-	-	-
1924	126	11	8.73	16	2	12.5
1928	109	14	12.84	14	2	14.28
1932	117	14	11.96	14	2	14.28
1936	129	15	11.62	17	3	17.64
1948	136	19	13.97	22	5	22.72
1952	149	25	16.77	22	6	27.27
1956	151	26	17.21	24	7	29.16
1960	150	29	19.33	27	11	40.74
1964	163	33	20.24	34	13	38.23
1968	172	39	22.67	35	13	37.14
1972	195	43	22.05	35	13	37.14
1976	198	49	24.74	37	14	37.83
1980	203	50	24.63	38	14	36.84
1984	221	62	28.05	39	15	38.46
1988	237	86*	36.28	46	18	39.13
1992	257	98*	28.13	57	25	43.86
1994				61	27	44.26
1996	271	108*	39.85			
1998				68	31	45.58
2000	300	132*	44			
2002				78	37	47.4
2004	301	135*	44.9			
2006				84	40	47.6
2008	302	137*	45.4			

Notes: \*Including mixed events/\*\*including mixed events from 1924 to 2006/2008 figures are official estimates set by the IOC's executive board. (For more information about the disciplines and the list of events women compete in at the Games, please visit <http://www.olympic.org>).





### Team GB 2004

Table 3 shows that 48% of the GB Olympic team (including coaches, athletes, team leaders, etc) at Athens 2004 were women. Of the athletes alone, around 39% were women.

In terms of average income, there was a gender discrepancy between competitors, with the average female income of £16,161 compared with £19,194 for men. Female athletes were also more likely than male athletes to be in debt (46% and 35% respectively).

**Table 3:** Team GB 2004

	% British Team*	Average age of athletes	Income	% of athletes in debt
Men	53	27.5	£19,194	35
Women	48	26.5	£16,161	46

\*Includes non-athletes, such as coaches, team leaders and physios.  
Note: Numbers that do not add to 100 may be due to rounding.

Source: The Athens Athlete Report. Produced by the Olympic Committee of the British Athletes Commission, 2004.

### Leadership at the Olympics

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), which oversees the Olympic Games, established targets in 1996 for National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs) to have at least 10% of all offices in decision-making structures held by women by 31 December 2000, and at least 20% by 31 December 2005.

### Representation of women in NOCs as at 31 December 2005

Based on the information provided by 192 NOCs (out of a possible 203):

- 62 NOCs (32%) have more than 20% women on their board, an increase from 25.7% in 2003
- 148 NOCs (77%) have met the previous target of a minimum of 10%, an increase from 60.9% in 2003
- 182 NOCs (95%) have at least one woman on their executive board. This is an increase from 90.4% in 2003.

### Representation of women in IFs as at November 2006

Based on the information provided by 34 out of the 35 IFs:<sup>3</sup>

- 10 Olympic IFs (29%) have more than 20% women on their board (an increase from 23% at the end of 2003, although no change since 2005)
- 17 Olympic IFs (50%) have met the previous target of a minimum of 10% (a decrease from 57% at the end of 2003 and 54% in 2005)
- 30 Olympic IFs (88%) have at least one woman on their executive board (a decrease from 91% at the end of 2003 and 2005).

Based on the information provided by 26 out of 29 recognised IFs:

- 6 (23%) recognised IFs have more than 20% women on their board
- 14 (54%) recognised IFs have met the previous target of a minimum of 10%
- 20 (77%) recognised IFs have at least one woman on their board.

**Table 4:** Female and male membership of the IOC, Executive Board and Commissions, 2003 and 2006

	Women 2003	Women 2006	Men 2003	Men 2006	Total 2003	Total 2006	% who are women 2003	% who are women 2006
Executive Board	1	1	14	14	15	15	6.6	6.6
IOC members	12	14	114	99	126	113	9.5	12.4
Commissions	25	34	242	209	267	243	9.3	14.0

Source: International Olympic Committee. Women in the Olympic Movement: Update Factsheet, Nov 2006.

The statistics in Table 4 show that the representation of women as leaders in the IOC itself is slowly increasing. Within the IOC, as of November 2006, there were 14 women members representing 12.4% of the total 113 IOC members, an increase from 9.5% in 2003.

<sup>3</sup> International Federations are the actual Olympic Federations whose sports are part of the Olympic programme. The term Recognised Federations refers to the International Federations whose sports although being recognised by the IOC, are not part of the Olympic programme.



## IOC and their commitment to women in sport

The IOC recognises the importance of rewarding the efforts of women across the globe in their attempt to increase female involvement in the Olympic Movement. Therefore, in 2000 they introduced the Women and Sport Trophies, which are awarded annually to promote the advancement of women in sport. Six trophies are awarded each year, one for each continent and one for the world.

The Olympic Solidarity Assistance Programs (OSAP) are available to athletes, coaches and leaders through their NOC. They were set up to provide funding for individuals in an attempt to get more men and women to the Games. The statistics<sup>4</sup> below demonstrate how effective the OSAP have been:

### Female athlete scholarship

**Atlanta 1996** – 21.1% of all scholarship funds went to women.

**Sydney 2000** – 25.6% of all scholarship funds went to women.

**Athens 2004** – 30.6% of all scholarship funds went to women.

### Female coach scholarship

**1997** – 9.3% of all scholarship funds went to women.

**2002** – 12% of all scholarship funds went to women.

**2004** – 10% of all scholarship funds went to women.

### Female leader's scholarship

**Between 1997-2001**, 60 (13.3%) female National Sport Directors were trained through this programme (of a total of 450 directors). 65 NOCs organised 152 courses for 4,263 participants, among whom 1,201 were women (28.2%).

<sup>4</sup> Department of International Cooperation and Development, (2003), Women and the Olympic Movement: Factsheet.

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The work of the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation is motivated by our vision of a nation of active women, where sport and exercise is an integral part of everyday life.

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