



International  
Olympic  
Committee

# PORTRAYAL GUIDELINES

## GENDER-EQUAL, FAIR AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION IN SPORT

2021 Edition



This is the second 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.



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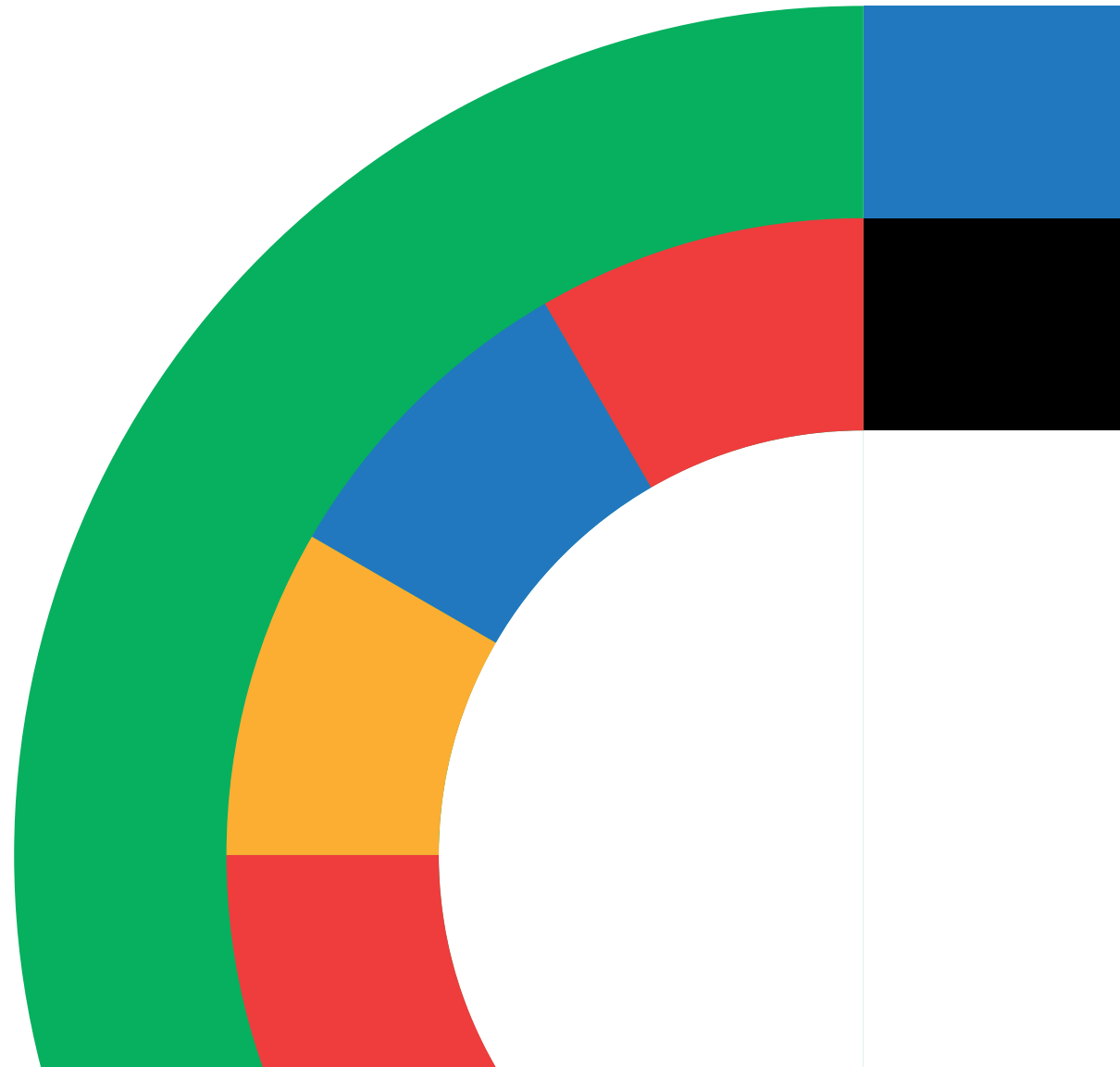
# INTRODUCTION

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 and minority communities, 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 and minorities 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, much like men, are not a homogenous group, nor are they solely defined by their gender identity. All individuals have multiple intersecting identities. Other social markers of difference such as race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, culture or sexual orientation (to list but a few) inform a person's identity. Balanced portrayal practices should also ensure that the diversity and **intersectionality** 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 as "women", "men" or "athletes".



# 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 genders. One of the difficulties in this area is knowing what the terms mean and understanding the concepts. This second edition of the Portrayal Guidelines presents some context and definitions to help guide your presentation of gender, and in particular women in sport.

“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,**  
Executive Director, UN Women

# TERMS TO KNOW

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

**GENDER:** refers to socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men (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 women’s and men’s traditionally assigned roles, attributes and characteristics according to whether they are female or male. 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

In the context of sport, research and testimonials have thus far repeatedly shown that there are some fundamental differences in the treatment between genders 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 a small 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).

Women are also **underrepresented in leadership** and sports media at all levels.

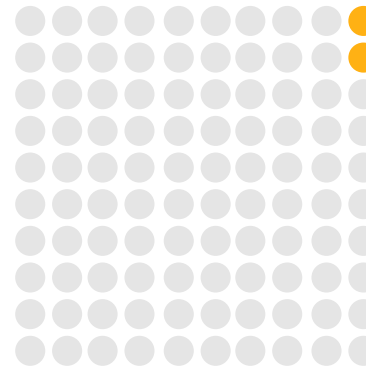
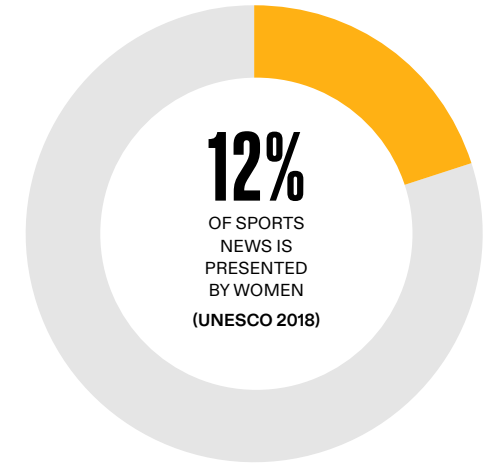
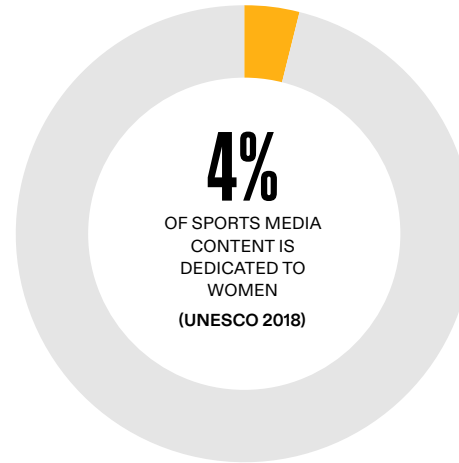
## 2. LACK OF RECOGNITION

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**.



**Only 2 female athletes among top 100 highest-paid athletes in 2020**

(FORBES 2020)



“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 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...



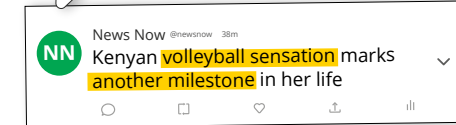
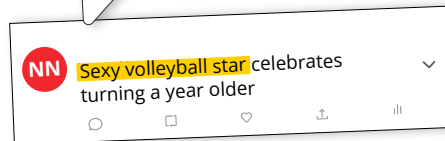
*"They might as well be standing in the middle of the mall"*

*"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

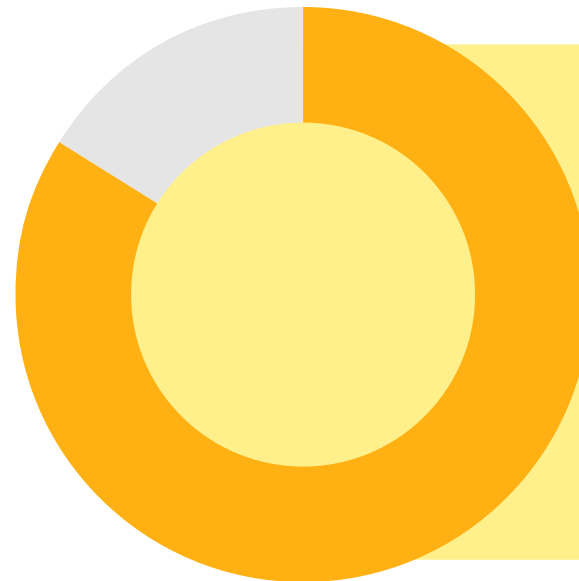
With the record participation of female athletes at the Olympic Games, and the acknowledged spotlight and increased visibility that comes with major sports events, there is a prime opportunity for sports organisations and leaders to call and strive for a more balanced and fair representation of genders.

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

# 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 second 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](http://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 the other.

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). 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

Do not assume a person’s gender identity. Always 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**.

**All athletes** are required to always have **their** accreditation on **them**.

OR

**The athlete** is required to always have **their** accreditation on **them**.

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: **beautiful, powerful, strong, graceful, athletic, determined, dominant**

*not* gendered or sexist descriptions e.g. **sexy, girly, manly, like a 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 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.



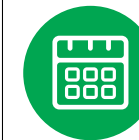
The quality (production) of women’s and men’s sports coverage and the presentation of athletes **should be equal**. Neither gender should be favoured.



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 RHBS

Work closely with Rights-Holding Broadcasters 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 coverage disparity. The final weekend, and in particular the last Sunday of the Olympic Games, is a prime broadcasting moment. At PyeongChang 2018, the IOC adapted the competition schedule to ensure gender balance both in medal events and in hours of competition for the last day of competitions, giving equal prominence and exposure to both women’s and men’s sport. Substantial progress has also been made between Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020 to make the Olympic Games competition schedule gender balanced and set the direction for future Olympic Games.



# 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.



“I don’t identify myself on the tennis court as a mother. I still identify myself as a tennis player. Me being in the quarterfinals, I didn’t get there by being a parent. I got there by being a tennis player.”

Victoria Azarenka, Belarusian tennis player and Olympic gold medalist, London 2012

## 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 or interviewers 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/](https://olympics.com/athlete365/personalbrand/)

“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 medalist, Sochi 2014

# 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, 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, proactively 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** Offer incentives to 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** Distribute 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 Women and Sport 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](http://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/](http://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/](http://sportnz.org.nz/mediaanalysis/about/)

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## SPORT

**IOC Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives 2021 – 2024**

**IOC Gender Equality Review Project Report (2018)**

**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 Women Gender Equality glossary**

**Sport for Generation Equality Framework**  
Driving implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action through the power of the sports ecosystem

**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

**UNESCO gender-sensitive indicators for media**

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

**Gender equality and sports media**  
Her Headline: Chrome extension to highlight sexist language in sports media

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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.

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