



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND



SPORT IRELAND POLICY ON

WOMEN IN SPORT

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Sport Ireland is the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland. This includes participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching and the development of the Sport Ireland National Sports Campus.

Sport Ireland's mission is to:

- Communicate the value and lead the thinking on sport.
- Promote an inclusive and fair culture.
- Generate value from finite resources.
- Build strong sports organisations.
- Realise the concept of 'sport for life for everyone'.

Sport Ireland recognises that there are values which are central to development of Sport in Ireland:

Player: We respect the right of everyone to invest in, participate in and achieve their potential in sport.

Team: We work collaboratively to achieve shared goals.

Fairplay: The development of sport must be based on a strong ethos of fairplay.

Precision: Sport generates great passion; it must also be exact in showing what it can deliver for individuals and communities.



OUR VISION

This policy expresses Sport Ireland's commitment to women in sport. It seeks to build on the significant work which has already been undertaken in this area within the sport sector to date and, in recognising the opportunity to make a significant impact on the lives of women through their involvement in sport, it provides a blueprint for Sport Ireland's future work. It is aligned with the Government's National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 and forms a key element of Sport Ireland's new corporate strategy. As referenced throughout this policy, 'women' encompasses women and girls of all ages; all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds; and is inclusive of all abilities.

Sport Ireland's vision for women in sport is one where women have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, while enjoying a lifelong involvement in sport.

OUR COMMITMENT

Sport Ireland has a strong and enduring track record of investment in women in sport. Established in 2005, the Women in Sport Programme has funded a wide range of initiatives delivered by NGBs and LSPs to further the agenda of gender equality in sport. We are now reaffirming our commitment to women in sport, as embedded in the recent policies of Government, specifically the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 (Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport), and the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 (Department of Justice and Equality).

Sport Ireland is committed to increasing women's sustained involvement in sport as coaches, volunteers, club members, athletes, advocates, leaders, and participants from grassroots to the podium.



CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

On foot of a 2004 study by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) which showed that less than one in five women completed 30 minutes of physical activity on at least five days per week as recommended by the WHO, Sport Ireland developed a Women in Sport (WIS) Programme in 2005. The aim of this Programme was to “raise overall physical activity levels and support women’s roles within funded bodies”. To date, over €19m has been invested through the Women in Sport Programme in National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships. This investment has supported the delivery of a variety of sports participation initiatives and the development of organisational capacity through the employment of women in a variety of roles.

Present day, the Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) tells us that 40.8% of females regularly participate in sport. This has increased from 39.3% in 2015. Since the introduction of the ISM in 2007 the gap between male and female sports participation has shifted from 15.7% to 4.5% (ISM 2017). We recognise that we are moving in the right direction.

Notwithstanding this, eliminating the gender gradient fully remains our ultimate objective. The National Sports Policy targets equal participation in sport by 2027. This policy will take action towards reaching this target.

The Women in Sport Programme has helped to foster improvements throughout the sector. It is considered that Ireland now needs a refreshed strategic approach to reflect present-day challenges and opportunities for women in sport. With this in mind, Sport Ireland, with the assistance of funding under the Dormant Accounts Fund, established the Women in Sport Project in 2018 with three main objectives, namely to:

1. Develop an enhanced understanding of the current landscape for women’s involvement in all areas of sport
2. Identify common barriers and opportunities for women in sport
3. Make recommendations to inform the development of future policies and programmes relating to strengthening women’s involvement in sport.



Sport Ireland sought to hear as many voices through this project and it was critical that the voices of men and women, from all backgrounds, were captured. Delivered by consultants Lisa Clancy and Sarah O'Shea, the project stimulated high levels of engagement. This included:

- 150 people participated in focus groups in Dublin, Limerick, and Sligo.
- 2,923 people responded to an online survey.
- 27 LSPs and 46 NGBs completed a gender leadership survey.
- Over 30 stakeholder engagements were conducted.

The Project also reflected on international trends and best practice.

The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders in 2015 has set the roadmap to achieve gender equality by 2030. This Agenda explicitly recognises sport as an important enabler for development and women's empowerment.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) is committed to women in sport through the work of their Women in Sport Commission. This Commission is tasked with the development and implementation of the IOC's women in sport strategy, where its objectives include: to advocate for increased participation of women athletes in the Olympic programme and in leadership positions in the Olympic Movement; to promote the rights and well-being of women and girls in and through sport and provide greater access to sport for girls and women; and recognise the achievements of individuals and organisations promoting women in and through sport, including through the Women and Sport Award.

There is an opportunity for Ireland to become international leaders in women in sport through the adoption of best practice by these world bodies.

OUR TARGET AREAS

Sport Ireland recognises the proven success and demonstrated potential of the sport sector to deliver on our women in sport objectives. To this end, Sport Ireland remains committed to strengthening our partnerships with NGBs and LSPs.

Through the Women in Sport Project, national policies, and recognised national research, Sport Ireland identifies four key areas which have emerged as **current gaps & future opportunities for women in sport**. We will target each of these four areas to deliver on the commitments of this policy.



To address each of these target areas, Sport Ireland is focused on achieving the objectives assigned to each area. These objectives are reflective of the National Sports Policy 2018-2027 and National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020.

Coaching and Officiating

Objectives:

- Broaden the coaching base to include more women from grassroots to high performance
- Increase the number of women officiating and refereeing

Active Participation

Objectives:

- Significantly reduce the active sport participation gradient between men and women
- Reduce the drop-out from physical activity and sport in young girls

Leadership & Governance

Objectives:

- Progress towards greater gender balance in Board membership of funded bodies
- Provide a pathway for women aspiring to become leaders of funded bodies

Visibility

Objectives:

- Increase the visibility and profile of our female role models in sport
- Use the heroes of today to inspire the next generation of Olympians and Paralympians



OUR ACTIONS

To address the target areas and achieve the identified objectives, there are a number of actions that Sport Ireland will take. Underpinning this work will be three measures:

1. Appoint a Women in Sport Lead to act authoritatively and strategically to develop and promote women and girl's involvement in sport from leadership to participation to high performance. This role will contribute to the delivery of the organisations strategic vision of 'developing a world class sports sector operating to the highest standards of governance and accountability'. A key output for this role will be to lead, advocate for and evaluate this policy.

2. Relaunch the Women in Sport Programme with a move in investment towards initiatives by NGBs and LSPs addressing the four target areas on a sustainable basis.

3. The Women in Sport Steering Committee will oversee the delivery of action 32 in the National Sports Policy: "NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans. Support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). Sport Ireland will monitor their progress in delivering on these and report annually."



Coaching and Officiating

Objectives:

- Broaden the coaching base to include more women from grassroots to high performance
- Increase the number of women officiating and refereeing

Actions:

- Invest in targeted coach education programmes in NGBs
- Support NGBs to deliver flexible learning to women
- Invest in education programmes which target young people



Active Participation

Objectives:

- Significantly reduce the active sport participation gradient between men and women
- Reduce the drop-out from physical activity and sport in young girls

Actions:

- Invest in participation programmes which lead to sustained engagement in sport by women and girls
- Promote the establishment of a 'girls in sport toolkit' which better assists coaches in supporting young girls who are at risk of drop-out



Leadership & Governance

Objectives:

- Progress towards greater gender balance in Board membership of funded bodies
- Provide a pathway for women aspiring to become leaders of funded bodies

Actions:

- Recognise and reward NGBs who have achieved gender diversity at Board level
- Provide gender diversity training to NGBs and LSPs
- Develop and invest in leadership and mentorship courses for women and girls



Visibility

Objectives:

- Increase the visibility and profile of our female role models in sport
- Use the heroes of today to inspire the next generation of future Olympians and Paralympians

Actions:

- Develop and implement a Women in Sport Communications Plan
- Publish annual achievements by sporting bodies receiving WIS funding
- Require female athletes in receipt of funding to 'give back' as ambassadors for sport

CURRENT RESEARCH

As set out in the table opposite, there are varying levels of information available which serve as a benchmark to each of the 4 target areas.



TARGET AREA	INDICATORS	BASELINE FIGURE	SOURCE OF INFORMATION/YEAR
 Coaching and Officiating	Ratio of Male to Female Coaches in Sport	2.5:1	ISM 2015 – 2017
	Ratio of Male to Female Referees	2.3:1	ISM 2015 – 2017
 Active Participation	Gender Gap in adult participation in sport	4.5%	ISM 2017
	Reported levels of non-participation in club sport by age group among girls and young women	42% among 14 – 15 year olds	CSPPA 2018 (currently unpublished)
		63% among 16 – 17 year olds	
		65% among 18 – 20 year olds	
% of adult sports club members who are female	42%	ISM 2015 – 2017	
 Leadership & Governance	Proportion of paid CEOs who are female	24%	NGB data
	Proportion of female Chairs of NGB Boards/ Decision Making Authorities	23%	Sport Ireland research
	Proportion of female Board members in National Governing Bodies	23%	NGB data
 Visibility	Proportion of sports print media articles devoted to women's sport	3%	Sport Ireland research 2015 (to be reviewed in 2019)

RESOURCES



Sport Ireland will assign appropriate resources to deliver on the commitments of this Policy. There are three core areas of resource: People, Programmes, and Investment.

People: The Sport Ireland Women in Sport Steering Committee will continue to deliver on their remit acting as a leadership group overseeing the implementation of this Policy. The Women in Sport Lead will be tasked with Policy activation. NGBs and LSPs will be consulted in this process ensuring all four target areas are sufficiently addressed.

Funding: Funding for the Women in Sport Programme has remained at €970,000 annually for the last three years. Sport Ireland is committed to strategically increasing this investment from 2019.

Programmes: Sport Ireland recognises the capacity of NGBs and LSPs to deliver initiatives that impact on women in sport. Sport Ireland will continue to invest in the programmes of NGBs and LSP and will relaunch the Women in Sport Programme in 2019. Sport Ireland will also enhance the work delivered to the sport sector internally with a specific focus on governance, leadership, and mentorship.





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