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Women advancement and empowerment in Olympics: A case study

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Abstract

Over the years, the IOC has been actively advocating the advancement of gender equality and women and girls' empowerment across the Olympic Movement and beyond. As an international organization with worldwide recognition, the IOC uses national, regional and international platforms and events to advocate increasing possibilities for girls and women in sport. The data was collected from 1900 to 2016 to investigate the advancement and empowerment of women in Summer as well as winter Olympic games and the data revealed the most games were introduced for women during the period 1988 to 2014. Female participation in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro were similar to 2012 London, close to equality but not quite there yet. The International Olympic Committee, or IOC, expects some 4,700 female athletes will compete in Rio, dozens more than at London 2012, when the figure was 4,676, accounting for about 45 percent of total competitors. Further the data on winter Olympics revealed that at the first Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix in 1924, there were only 11 women participants out of the total 258 competitors. In fact there was only two events for women, the women's figure skating and mixed pairs. Women athletes could compete in only figure skating until 1948 when skiing was opened as a competitive sport for women. As per the recent data 2014 the women are now competing in 49 events and total 50.0 % women are participating which is equal to the men participation. The data of women advancement as Executive members in IOC was also investigated for winter and summer Olympic games.

Keywords: Advancement, empowerment, gender equality

Introduction

The IOC is committed to gender equality in sport. The Olympic Charter states that one of the roles of the IOC is "to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures.

In the last 20 years, the IOC has also increased the number of women's events on the Olympic programme, in cooperation with the International Federations (IFs) and the Organizing Committees.

Over the years, the IOC has been actively advocating the advancement of gender equality and women and girls' empowerment across the Olympic Movement and beyond. As an international organization with worldwide recognition, the IOC uses national, regional and international platforms and events to advocate increasing possibilities for girls and women in sport. The annual IOC Women and Sport Awards and the quadrennial IOC World Conferences on Women and Sport are two of the important advocacy initiatives. Additionally, in partnership with international organizations, such as the United Nations, the work of the IOC to promote sport for social development extends well beyond its walls. The IOC wishes to capitalize on the transformational power of sport to foster gender equality and equal opportunities for women and men worldwide. The present study was undertaken:

- To find out the percentage of women participation in summer and Winter Olympic Games.
- To find the advancement of women and empowerment of women through IOC.

It is hypothesized that the Olympic movement immensely contributed for the advancement and empowerment of women through sports.

Methods

Study Design, including a description of participants and selection strategies, data collection procedures, measures and approaches to analysis. The Data was collected from different research articles, journals, magazines, research works published in reputed journals Besides these sources the data was also collected from internet (Google) and from different discussions and news articles. Further reliable sources of information's were accessed like Olympic Charters, Reports of International conferences on Gender Equality Organized by the IOC to know the advancement and empowerment of

women in Olympics and their participation in various Olympic committees and international federations. The researcher has tried to find out the percentage of women participation in the Olympic games.

Results

After careful examination of the collected data the researcher analyse the data and further investigations were made which is presented herewith The data of introduction of events for women time to time is presented in Table-1.

Table 1: Introduction of Women Sports

Year	Sports
1900	Tennis, Golf
1904	Archery
1908	Tennis*, Skating
1912	Aquatics
1924	Fencing
1928	Athletics, Gymnastics
1936	Skiing
1948	Canoe-Kayak
1952	Equestrian
1964	Volleyball, Luge
1976	Rowing, Basketball, Handball
1980	Hockey
1984	Shooting, Cycling
1988	Tennis*, Table Tennis, Sailing
1992	Badminton, Judo, Biathlon
1996	Football, Softball
1998	Curling, Ice Hockey
2000	Weightlifting, Modern Pentathlon, Taekwondo, Triathlon
2002	Bobsleigh
2004	Wrestling
2012	Boxing
2016	Rugby, Golf*

Further the graphical presentation of Women participants at each Summer Olympic Games and Winter Olympic games is

presented as a percentage of all participants is presented in Table-2 & Table-2.

Table 2: Women's participation in the Games of the Olympiad

Year	Sports	Women's Events*	Total events	% of women's events	Women participants	% of women participants
1900	2	2	95	2.1	22	2.2
1904	1	3	91	3.3	6	0.9
1908	2	4	110	3.6	37	1.8
1912	2	5	102	4.9	48	2.0
1920	2	8	154	5.2	63	2.4
1924	3	10	126	7.9	135	4.4
1928	4	14	109	12.8	277	9.6
1932	3	14	117	12.0	126	9
1936	4	15	129	11.6	331	8.3
1948	5	19	136	14.0	390	9.5
1952	6	25	149	16.8	519	10.5
1956	6	26	151	17.2	376	13.3
1960	6	29	150	19.3	611	11.4
1964	7	33	163	20.2	678	13.2
1968	7	39	172	22.7	781	14.2
1972	8	43	195	22.1	1,059	14.6
1976	11	49	198	24.7	1,260	20.7
1980	12	50	203	24.6	1,115	21.5
1984	14	62	221	28.1	1,566	23
1988	17	72	237	30.4	2,194	26.1
1992	19	86	257	33.5	2704	28.8
1996	21	97	271	35.8	3512	34.0
2000	25	120	300	40	4069	38.2
2004	26	125	301	41.5	4329	40.7
2008	26	127	302	42.1	4637	42.4

2012	26	140	302	46.2	4676	44.2
2016	28	145	306	47.4	4700	45

*: including mixed events

As per the Figure 1 The first Olympic Games featured female athletes was the 1900 Games in Paris. Tennis and golf were the only sports where women could compete in individual disciplines. 22 women competed at the 1900 Games, 2.2% of all the competitors. Alongside sailing, golf and tennis, women also competed in croquet.

Female participation in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro was similar to 2012 London, close to equality but not quite there yet. The International Olympic Committee, or IOC, expects some 4,700 female athletes will compete in Rio, dozens more than at London 2012, when the figure was 4,676, accounting for about 45 percent of total competitors.

The Olympic program features 28 sports for male and female athletes of the 306 medal competitions, 161 are for males, 136 for females and nine mixed in tennis, badminton and equestrian events.

The Atlanta Games in 1996 marked a milestone by having more than one-third female participation - 34 percent versus 28 percent at Barcelona 1992.

Since Sydney 2000, the growth in women's participation has been limited to 2 percent every four years. The IOC requires new sports wishing to enter the Olympic program to provide equal tests; however, there are several traditional sports, such as wrestling, that have lesser parity, with 13 men's and four women's events, and canoeing with eight men's to three women's regattas for calm waters.

Since the 2012 London Games, boxing offers three weight categories for women compared to 10 for men.

Swimming is the only sport that offers more medals to women than men, but two medals are for synchronized swimming and team swimming, which are reserved for females. The data of male and female Executive Board (EB) members of IOC is given below in pie chart as Figure 1.

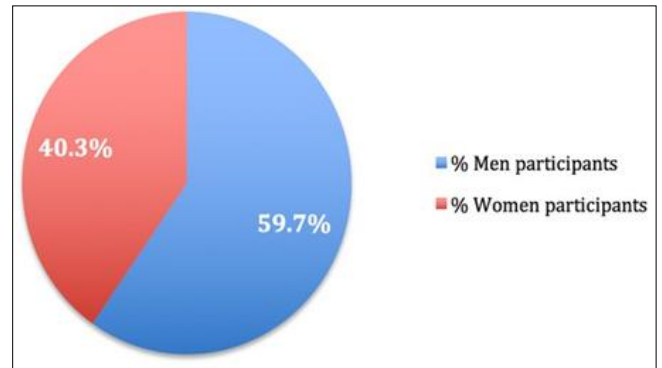


Fig 1: Women's participation in the Summer Olympic Games (2014)

The above data reveals that the female participation as EB members (40.3%) has considerably improved as compared to male (59.7%) While the participation of women in physical activities and the Olympic Games has steadily increased, the percentage of women in governing and administrative bodies is increasing at steady rate.

Further the data was collected for the participation of women in winter Olympic games which is presented in Table-3.

Table 3: Women's participation in the Winter Olympic Games

Year	Sports	Women's Events*	Total events	% of women's events	Women participants	% of women participants
1924	1	2	16	12.5	11	4.3
1928	1	2	14	14.3	26	5.6
1932	1	2	14	14.3	21	8.3
1936	2	3	17	17.6	80	12
1948	2	5	22	22.7	77	11.5
1952	2	6	22	27.3	109	15.7
1956	2	7	24	29.2	134	17
1960	2	11	27	40.7	144	21.5
1964	3	14	34	41.2	199	18.3
1968	3	14	35	40.0	211	18.2
1972	3	14	35	40.0	205	20.5
1976	3	15	37	40.5	231	20.6
1980	3	15	38	39.5	232	21.7
1984	3	16	39	41.0	274	21.5
1988	3	19	46	41.3	301	21.2
1992	4	26	57	45.6	488	27.1
1994	4	28	61	45.9	522	30
1998	6	32	68	47.1	787	36.2
2002	7	37	78	47.4	886	36.9
2006	7	40	84	47.6	960	38.2
2010	7	41	86	47.7	1,044	40.7
2014	7	49	98	50.0	~1120	40.3

The Table-3 reveals that at the first Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix in 1924, there were only 11 women participants out of the total 258 competitors. In fact there was only two events for women, the women's figure skating and mixed pairs. Women athletes could compete in only figure skating

until 1948 when skiing was opened as a competitive sport for women. As per the recent data 2014 the women are now competing in 49 events and total 50.0 % women are participating which is equal to the men participation.

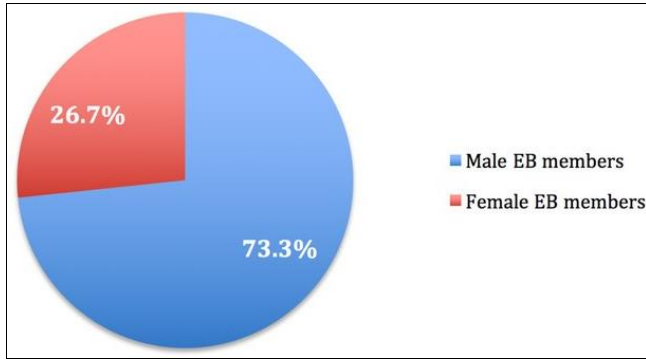


Fig 2: Women’s participation in the Olympic Winter Games (2014)

As per Figure 2 data shows that still there is need of more women EB members of International Olympic Committee to be selected as only 26.7% women members were elected against 73.3 % male members in Winter Olympic Games.

Conclusions and Implications

The modern Olympic Games haven't always been as welcoming and apolitical as they are today. In the early days of the games, women made up a very small percentage of the athletes, and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) only allowed women to compete in a few events.

Women first took part in the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900, four years after the first Olympic Games of the modern era in Athens. Despite the reticence of the reviver of the modern Games, Pierre de Coubertin, 22 women out of a total of 997 athletes competed in just five sports: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian and golf. But only golf and tennis had events for women only. Female participation has increased steadily since then, with women accounting for more than 44 per cent of the participants at the 2012 Games in London, compared with 23 per cent at the Games in 1984 in Los Angeles and just over 13 per cent at the 1964 Games in Tokyo.

In the last 20 years, the IOC has also increased the number of women’s events on the Olympic programme, in cooperation with the International Federations (IFs) and the Organizing Committees. With the addition of women’s boxing, the 2012 Olympic Games in London were the first in which women competed in every sport on the Olympic programme.

Also, since 1991, all new sports wishing to be included on the Olympic programme must feature women’s events.

The following Conclusions may be drawn from the study

- The number of women athletes at the Olympic Games is approaching 50 per cent. Since 2012, both in Winter and Summer Olympic Games
- Women have participated in every Olympic sport at the Games. All new sports included in the Games contain women’s events.
- The IOC has increased the number of women’s events on the Olympic programme, in collaboration with the IFs and the organizing committees.
- IOC has successfully achieved Empowerment and advancement of women through sports.

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