

2021 – 2024

WOMEN IN SPORT

STRATEGIC PLAN

WOMEN IN SPORT W.I.S. STRATEGIC PLAN



Athletics has a long history of promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. Athletics has traditionally been a diverse sport, both on and off track. It has the distinction of being one of the few sports where men and women compete at the same time in the same arena.

Athletics has identical disciplines for men and women at major championships and offers the same prize money. Currently the Athletics Ireland membership is broken down into 52% female and 48% male. This continues a trend where female members are in a majority in recent years. Athletics Ireland recognises there is still work required in some areas of the sport.

We are acutely aware of the need for continuous action to advance gender equality in all areas of our sport and organisation. Athletics Ireland is focusing on the areas of leadership, high performance coaching and encouraging more women to fill decision making positions.

This strategic plan expresses Athletics Ireland's commitment to women in sport. Since 2019, Athletics Ireland have received investment from Sport Ireland to deliver agreed W.I.S. objectives identified by Sport Ireland. Athletics Ireland has continued to advocate and contribute to greater female representation at all levels of our sport.

Sport Ireland have identified four key areas which have emerged as current gaps and future opportunities for women in sport. These target areas are as follows:



COACHING AND OFFICIATING



ACTIVE PARTICIPATION



LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE



VISIBILITY

The strategic work by World Athletics, European Athletics, Sport Ireland and Athletics Ireland has highlighted the profile of female athletic endeavour. We recognise this as an opportunity to build greater momentum and further increase female representation at every level of our sport.

Building on this progress, we set ourselves a number of Women in Sport Strategic Priorities for 2021–2024 as follow:

1. **Increase the gender balance** on all national committees to a minimum 40% of each gender; and broaden diversity on national committees.
2. Develop and support a robust pipeline of **women in leadership roles** through programmes and pathways.
3. Increase the number of women attending **higher level coaching courses** (Level 2 & 3) by 10% per year.
4. Contribute to the **health and wellbeing** of women and girls across the nation.
5. A communication strategy focused on **highlighting women in leadership**.

Women in Sport Vision

Athletics Ireland will ensure that our actions, programmes and initiatives are member-centred, and committed to the promotion and representation of female athletic endeavour.

To achieve this, Athletics Ireland will:

- **Ensure** there is ample space for **all female members to be respected, valued, and accommodated**.
- **Ensure** that opportunities, pathways, and structures exist to **strengthen our targeted female programmes** in the short, medium and long term.
- **Enhance** and equip our female members with the necessary **skills to lead both on and off the track**.
- **Reinforce** the values of **integrity, respect, inclusion and excellence** amongst our members.
- **Meet** specific **standards of performance** and adhering to **best practices**.



Athletics Ireland Mission

Athletics Ireland – delivering excellence to all our stakeholders to become the nation's sport of choice.

Athletics Ireland Values

In line with our strategic plan for 2021-2024, our vision is as follows:

INTEGRITY

We operate honestly, with fairness, transparency and to best practice.

RESPECT

We promote respect for everyone.

INCLUSION

We welcome everyone, and we embrace diversity.

EXCELLENCE

We have ambitious targets and support everyone to realise their full potential.

Purpose of this document

1. Outline the responsibility of stakeholders to ensure that women and girls are at the heart of the AAI's strategic direction, activity and decision-making, whilst driving the growth of female representation, attracting new members, participants, partners, and funders.
2. Update the Board on WIS strategic priorities and next steps required to progress the realisation of Sport Ireland's vision and pillars of activity.
3. Provide a strategic approach for the communication and delivery of each work pillar to ensure effective collaboration between AAI, provincial boards, and county boards.
4. Seek Sport Ireland approval of the strategic pillars and delivery structure with the knowledge that delivery will require resources to ensure its successful delivery.





GOALS & KPIs

Athletics Ireland Strategic Pillar	Focus	KPIS 2021-2024
<p>Pillar 1 Coaching & Officiating</p> <p>Increase the number of female coaches attending the higher levels of the coach education system.</p> <p>Developing a framework for the identification, recruitment, and development of female coaches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a clear understanding of the current situation through surveying and data collection. • Set priorities and targets to grow female coaches in athletics. • Research other sports to identify best practice and resources for developing coaches. • Strategic plan in place to develop female coaches through mentoring, networking, and communities of practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of women with Level 3 and Level 2 coaching qualifications by 10% per year. • Create a toolkit and resources alongside DCU that will support and develop female coaches. • Continue a positive year on year growth rate of female coaching networks and events specifically aimed at female coaches.
<p>Pillar 2 Active Participation</p> <p>More opportunities for women to be physically active with recognisable pathways.</p> <p>Develop a framework for the recruitment and development of more females and girls in athletics and ensuring they have equity of opportunities to become involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake research on the barriers and opportunities for women and girls to being physically active. • Identify a framework to recruit and develop more women and girls in a recreational environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of 2021, collate coaching data from research that represents the experiences of female coaches in Athletics Ireland. • 1,500 students participate in The Girls Squad.

Athletics Ireland Strategic Pillar	Focus	KPIs 2021–2024
<p>Pillar 3 Leadership & Governance</p> <p>More women in leadership and decision-making roles.</p> <p>Implementing a strategy for identification, recruitment, and development of women in decision making roles and implementing a mentoring programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Leadership Programme created and designed, and resources required to implement • Identify and engage with qualified moderators and mentors to deliver programme • Identify participants nationally and support network from clubs using agreed criteria • Identify mentors and support package • Launch Forerunners Leadership Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve an enhanced understanding of the current landscape for women’s involvement in athletics. • Establish WIS Committees at club level. Our plan is to establish 10 in 2021 and 15 in 2022. • Create and develop further female networks in coaching, participation, and leadership. Our Forerunners programme has been our first community of practice, and we intend to expand these networks through additional programmes such as High-Performance Coaching Pathway and the Women’s Student Coach Academy.
<p>Pillar 4 Visibility</p> <p>Increase the profile of female role models within the sport.</p> <p>Increase the visibility and profile of our female role models in sport and promote female endeavours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively promoting female role models at all levels of the sport. • Equity of publicity for the females within the sport. • Centralised communication to share resources, good practice and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a positive culture to enhance the experience of our female members. This will be measured through an annual survey of our network. • Achieve a broad geographic distribution of Forerunner programme graduates each year. • Ensure all female members feel supported and encouraged by Athletics Ireland, regardless of role or ability, in both personal and professional development. This will be measured in the annual survey of our network.



WOMEN IN SPORT IN NUMBERS



Membership

Over the last number of years, the Athletics Ireland membership has been increasing. Traditionally, our female membership has been very encouraging. We will continue to strongly support this.

Year	Female	Male	%
2020*	28,844	26,575	52% vs 48%
2019	33,070	29,499	53% vs 47%
2018	31,706	28,706	53% vs 47%

**These figures were impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic.*

Coaching & Officiating

It is difficult to capture the gender balance of our club coaches and officials at registration as members often do not list specific roles. There is no mandatory obligation to register as a coach or official, nor to report whether you are a practicing coach or official for the registered year.

The easiest data to capture is the attendance lists from the various coach education courses that we offer to the membership. Firstly, we analysed the attendance over recent years.

Coach Education Courses

The follow figures show the most recent figures for the completion of the coach education courses.

Year	Female	Male
Athletics Leader & Assistant Coach		
2021*	46%	54%
2020	47%	53%
2019	55%	45%
2018	53%	47%
Level 1		
2020*	40%	60%
2019	46%	54%
2018	48%	52%
Level 2		
2019	29%	71%
2017	33%	67%
Level 3		
2020/21	7%	93%

**These figures were impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic.*

Officials Courses

From an officiating standpoint, Athletics Ireland is committed to creating a clear and easily understood pathway for female officials to progress. Athletics Ireland has tailored the delivery of official's education and development programmes for our volunteers recently which may encourage more women to get involved.

Year	Female	Male
National Officials Panel		
2021	27%	73%
Level 1 Official Course		
2021	46%	54%
2020	47%	53%

Leadership & Governance

Athletics Ireland established itself as a professional organisation in 2005. Women have held most of the primary roles in the intervening period, in terms of management and on the principal committees. These include CEO, Director of Development, Director of Coaching, Operations Director and Director of Competitions along with President and Vice President. The principal committees: High Performance, Finance & Risk, Competition, Coaching & Development, Juvenile, etc., have all been chaired by females.

Athletics Ireland is monitoring the progress made by our provincial and county boards towards gender diversity, in which we have seen increased levels of women serving as committee officers. This is encouraging and we will continue to provide support to all our boards and committees. Note by 2028, 40% of our committees to be comprised of women.

Active Participation

Through various programmes and initiatives, Athletics Ireland is committed to making a significant contribution to the health of the nation. Running is seen as one of the most popular sports among both genders. The Irish Sports Monitor in 2019 found that women are more likely than men to participate in sport through organised training, coaching or lessons (women: 42%, men 26%). Fit4Life is based on the meet and train model, and it provides opportunity for recreational runners in a structured environment. This programme has proven to be highly successful with currently over 150 groups across the Athletics Ireland club network.

The 'Women in Sport' initiative funded by Sport Ireland has been the important element in this growth, allowing us appropriately resource Fit4Life and The Girls Squad. Recent data collected through our recreational running events has highlighted that attendance by women at these events are greater than 50%.

Sample recreational events in 2020 are as follows :

Event	Female	Male
5K Event	53%	47%
5 Mile Event	53%	47%
Remembrance Run	69%	31%

ATHLETICS IRELAND & WOMEN IN SPORT INITIATIVES & PROGRAMMES



To address the target areas and achieve the identified objectives, Athletics Ireland have devised a number of programmes to support and encourage female participation at every level. We believe that through appropriate programmes and action, we will empower female involvement, contribution and participation in athletics. The pathways and programmes that now exist will raise much needed awareness for women in sport activity and inspire more women to have the confidence, direction, and desire to act.

The following programmes have been designed to invest and target sustained engagement in athletics by women and girls:

1. Forerunners Leadership & Mentoring Programme

Forerunners is Athletics Ireland's pathway to supporting and encouraging our next generation of leading ladies in their athletic endeavours. This programme has been designed to support, assist and facilitate in the fields of coaching, club development, communication and connectivity. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from expert and experienced leaders in their fields, to equip female club service officers and leaders in becoming more effective and efficient in their operations.

2. European Gender Leadership Programme

This programme is being run in conjunction with European Athletics to solidify our commitment to all our women. This webinar project has been designed for key female stakeholders who are involved in our national federation and have the potential to be a leader in their respective field. This model, organised by World Athletics and European Athletics, in the long-term aims to enhance the international network of female leaders, and we are committed to working with these organisations to achieve that.

3. Women's Student Coaching Academy

The Women's Student Coaching Academy is a collaborative programme between SSI, Sport Ireland, 26 third level institutions and ten national governing bodies of sport (NGBs). The 10 NGBs include Athletics Ireland, Badminton Ireland, Basketball Ireland, the Camogie Association, the Football Association of Ireland, Hockey Ireland, the Irish Rugby Football Union, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association, Rowing Ireland, and Volleyball Ireland.

The aim of the academy is to provide the female student coaches with the support system that will enable them to develop and reach their coaching potential.

4. Women's Coaching Pathway

Athletics Ireland, Cycling Ireland, IABA, Rowing Ireland and Triathlon Ireland are collaborating to run the Women's Coaching Pathway. The programme is suitable for ambitious female coaches, who are looking to develop along the coaching pathway in their respective sport. Participants involved will receive support in personal and professional development, mentorship, coach education and hands-on experience in their respective High Performance teams.

5. The Girls Squad

The Girls Squad is a six-week programme aimed at young girls in Transition Year in school. We at Athletics Ireland hope to improve and support, both the physical and psychological wellbeing of young girls across the nation. The aim of this programme is to introduce young girls to the sport of athletics and to a general fitness regime through a physical and educational athletics programme. This programme will explore elements of track and field such as throwing, running and jumping in a fun and sociable environment. The students will also further explore healthy lifestyle habits through healthy eating and positive health and wellbeing activities.

6. Fit4Life

Fit4Life is an active participation programme which aims to promote fitness through walking and running. This programme provides an opportunity to those who wish to partake in recreational running, jogging or walking. This programme is open to all ages, and participants can train under the guidance of specifically trained Fit4Life leaders. The aim of the programme is to develop an understanding of the benefits of being physically active, in a safe and inclusive environment.

Through the above programmes, Athletics Ireland will:

- **Develop** and deliver the Sport Ireland **Women in Sport action plan** to develop and grow the sport.
- **Ensure** the women and girls action plan is **integrated to Athletics Ireland's** strategic plan.
- **Ensure** policies and strategies are **inclusive, diverse and equitable**.
- **Ensure** that the voices and ideas of women in the national federation are **heard and considered** when planning programmes and activities.
- **Identify** funding, programmes and activities to **grow and develop female participation**.
- **Create** **informed, skilled, self-directed and reflective women** who will strengthen Athletics Ireland at every level of our sport.

WOMEN IN SPORT

TARGET AREAS



Coaching & Officiating

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

Active Participation

- 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

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

Visibility

- 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



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

SPORT IRELAND POLICY ON
WOMEN IN SPORT

We thank you for your ongoing support of Athletics Ireland



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The clubs, volunteers and athletes who make up athletics in Ireland.

Athletics Ireland

Unit 19, Northwood,
Court Northwood Business Campus,
Santry, Dublin 9, Ireland

admin@athleticsireland.ie
www.athleticsireland.ie
[@irishathletics](https://twitter.com/irishathletics)