



3rd March 2020

Progress Towards Gender Balance on Boards – National Governing Body Leadership Composition Snapshot

In line with its Policy on Women in Sport, Sport Ireland will be publishing a biannual snapshot of female representation on the boards of funded National Governing Bodies of Sport.

The first update shows that females make up an average of 29% of boards across funded National Governing Bodies. This is an increase from 24% at when the [Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport](#) was published in 2019.

Leadership and Governance is one of the four key strategic areas on which the Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport is built, along with Coaching & Officiating, Visibility and Active Participation.

In this regard, a key objective of the Leadership and Governance target area is to progress towards greater gender balance in board membership of funded bodies. The second objective is to provide a pathway for women aspiring to become leaders of funded bodies.

Commenting on the publication of the statistics, Chair of Sport Ireland's Women in Sport Steering Committee, Lynne Cantwell, said: *"Boards are responsible for the direction & performance of Sport in Ireland. To do this well, all our Irish Sports need to draw on diverse perspectives and a variety of viewpoints in order to accurately represent sport & sports people in our country. The Women in Sport Steering Committee is committed to balancing board composition by increasing female representation to achieve gender equity."*

Action 32 of the Government's National Sports Policy 2018-2027 tasks National Governing Bodies with developing equality action plans and setting gender diversity targets.

Sport Ireland Director of Participation and Ethics, Dr Una May, commented: *"As part of Sport Ireland's responsibilities under the National Sport Policy, we are monitoring progress and providing periodical public updates on the progress of our funded bodies towards gender diversity, in particular the make-up of boards. It is encouraging to see progress in this area and we will continue to provide support to our funded bodies to keep up the momentum."*

The purpose of this update is to outline the current position, the progress made since the publication of the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy and highlight some of the action being taken across the sector as part of [Sport Ireland's Women in Sport Programme](#).

Sport Ireland Women in Sport Lead, Nora Stapleton, added: *“The work of the Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport and Women in Sport Programme invests in female leadership capacity, increases availability of skilled Female Board members and guides Governance best practice that supports gender equity. Publishing these biannual Board & Leadership statistics aims to help all sports in Ireland achieve these goals as we aim to help Irish sport thrive from grassroots to elite sport.”*

Board Representation

This information contained within this update has been provided by National Governing Bodies. It is encouraging to note that 23 National Governing Bodies have achieved a target of at least 30% females on their board.

NGBs who have obtained 30% female representation	
Irish Tenpin Bowling Association	50%
Gymnastics Ireland	44%
Irish Wheelchair Association Sport	50%
Ladies Gaelic Football Association	50%
Mountaineering Ireland	55%
National Community Games	56%
ONAKAI	42%
Rowing Ireland	55%
Basketball Ireland	38%
Fencing Ireland	45%
Horse Sport Ireland	38%
Irish Martial Arts Commission	32%
Irish Orienteering Association	36%
Croquet Association of Ireland	30%
Hockey Ireland	45%
Irish Squash	33%
Irish Taekwondo Union	33%
Racquetball Association of Ireland	30%
Special Olympics Ireland	46%
Tennis Ireland	31%
The Camogie Association	88%
Vision Sports Ireland	33%
Volleyball Association of Ireland	71%

National Governing Bodies with the most balanced board composition have a 60/40 gender split.

NGBs who have balanced board composition, i.e. 60/40 split	
Irish Tenpin Bowling Association	50%
Gymnastics Ireland	44%
Irish Wheelchair Association Sport	50%
Ladies Gaelic Football Association	50%
Mountaineering Ireland	55%
National Community Games	56%
ONAKAI	42%
Rowing Ireland	55%
Special Olympics Ireland	46%
Fencing Ireland	45%

While the increase in overall board composition across National Governing Bodies has increased from 24% to 29%, the journey to gender balance on boards is in its infancy. Over the coming six to twelve months, Sport Ireland will continue to pursue and seek new means and opportunities in order to support and assist funded bodies as they look to change this trend.

Sport Ireland Women in Sport Programme – Leadership & Governance

While the figures in some National Governing Bodies may indicate that they have some distance to travel before achieving appropriate gender diversity on boards (for example, 13 NGBs have boards of 10% or less females on their board), it is important to acknowledge the great work that is underway in order to speed up the process of achieving gender diversity. Numerous National Governing Bodies, through support from Sport Ireland’s Women in Sport Programme, are in the process of delivering female leadership training across their sport.

Some example of programmes currently underway include:

Canoeing Ireland, *current board composition, 8 male, 2 female (25%)*

Women in Sport Programme: Bridge the Gap

The programme will use a strategic framework of mentors and workshops to provide females with the toolkit and resources to fully realise their leadership potential and to give them the appetite and confidence to take leadership roles, become role models and mentor future leaders.

Canoeing Ireland CEO Moira Aston said; *“The Bridge the Gap program has helped us identify and recruit 35 ambassadors with a variety of experiences and backgrounds within our sport but with a shared goal to develop their leadership potential, raise awareness of and breakdown barriers to participation and mentor the next generation of strong female leaders. The positive feedback and engagement with program participants has opened a conversation that has transcended our expected outcomes and will enrich our sport into the future”.*

Athletics Ireland, current board composition, 12 male, 4 female (25%)

Women in Sport Programme: Forerunners

Through the Forerunners programme, Athletics Ireland aim to equip female club service officers and leaders in becoming more effective and efficient in their operations. The programme will address the importance of female leadership in athletics, its important role in promoting good governance whilst creating invaluable experiences for those involved in the programme. The programme will consist of three core modules, namely Club Development, Coaching, Communication and Connectivity and include an action-orientated mentorship programme to support and encourage future female leaders in sport to reach their potential.

Athletics Ireland CEO, Hamish Adams, stated his aims for the project, *“Athletics gender participation is extremely balanced at a competition and recreational level yet as a sport we are struggling to encourage women into leadership roles in coaching, administration and officiating. The Women in Sport programme led by Lily-Ann O’Hora aims to identify and remove barriers to female progression into our sports leadership roles. We value the considerable investment in this programme from both our membership and Sport Ireland and we sincerely believe that gender balance across all aspects of our organisation will deliver continued success for Athletics Ireland”.*

Other National Governing Bodies that are currently delivering, or will implement, a female leadership and/or governance initiative include:

- Swim Ireland
- Irish Athletic Boxing Association
- Cricket Ireland
- Triathlon Ireland
- Golf Ireland*
- Irish Rugby Football Union
- Tennis Ireland
- Hockey Ireland
- Badminton Ireland
- Olympic Federation of Ireland

- GAA Handball
- Irish Olympic Handball Association

**ILGU and GUI are currently in the process of merging; Golf Ireland is the name being used for all Women in Sport programmes*

Sport Ireland supports leadership programmes through the Sport Ireland's Women in Sport Programme.

Other programmes being delivered by NGBs outside of the Women in Sport programme funding, but having a positive impact in their organisation, are Learn to Lead (LGFA) and Emerging Leaders Programme (FAI).

National Governing Bodies – Board Composition

National Governing Body	No. of Board Members 2020	Female Board Members	% of Women on Board	CEO Stats
Angling Council of Ireland	12	3	25%	N/A
Archery Ireland*				N/A
Athletics Ireland	16	4	25%	Male
Badminton Ireland	9	2	22%	Male
Basketball Ireland	8	3	38%	Male
Baton Twirling Sport Association of Ireland	5	4	80%	N/A
Bol Chumann na hÉireann	8	1	13%	N/A
Bowling League of Ireland	9	0	0%	N/A
Canoeing Ireland	8	2	25%	Female
Cricket Ireland	12	2	17%	Male
Croquet Association of Ireland	10	3	30%	N/A
Cycling Ireland	10	1	10%	Male
Deaf Sports Ireland	7	1	14%	N/A

Fencing Ireland	11	5	45%	N/A
Football Association of Ireland	11	3	27%	Male
GAA Handball Ireland	14	0	0%	N/A
Gaelic Athletic Association	18	2	11%	Male
Gymnastics Ireland	9	4	44%	Male
Hockey Ireland	11	5	45%	Male
Horse Sport Ireland	8	3	38%	Male
Horseshoe Pitchers Association of Ireland*				N/A
Ice Skating Association of Ireland*				N/A
Irish Amateur Wrestling Association	12	1	8%	N/A
Irish American Football Association	7	2	29%	N/A
Irish Athletic Boxing Association	7	0	0%	Male
Irish Clay Target Shooting Association	10	0	0%	N/A
Irish Ice Hockey Association of Ireland	5	1	20%	N/A
Irish Judo Association	7	0	0%	N/A
Irish Martial Arts Commission	19	6	32%	N/A
Irish Olympic Handball Association	7	1	14%	N/A
Irish Orienteering Association	11	4	36%	N/A
Irish Rugby Football Union	25	2	8%	Male
Irish Sailing Association	12	3	25%	Male

Irish Squash	15	5	33%	N/A
Irish Surfing Association	7	2	29%	N/A
Irish Taekwondo Union	6	2	33%	N/A
Irish Tenpin Bowling Association	4	2	50%	N/A
Irish Tug of War Association	10	2	20%	N/A
Irish Underwater Council	11	3	27%	N/A
Irish Waterski & Wakeboard Federation	3	0	0%	N/A
Irish Wheelchair Association Sport	8	4	50%	N/A
Ladies Gaelic Football Association	14	7	50%	Female
Motor Cycling Ireland	9	2	22%	N/A
Motor Sport Ireland	6	0	0%	N/A
Mountaineering Ireland	11	6	55%	Male
National Aero Club*				N/A
National Community Games	16	9	56%	Male
ONAKAI	12	5	42%	N/A
Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland	10	1	10%	N/A
Racquetball Association of Ireland	10	3	30%	N/A
ROI Billiards & Snooker Association	9	0	0%	N/A
Rowing Ireland	11	6	55%	Female
Rugby League Ireland	15	3	20%	N/A
Special Olympics Ireland	13	6	46%	Male
Speleological Union of Ireland	11	2	18%	N/A

Swim Ireland	11	3	27%	Female
Table Tennis Ireland	4	0	0%	N/A
Tennis Ireland	16	5	31%	Male
The Camogie Association	16	14	88%	Female
Triathlon Ireland	8	1	13%	Male
Trout Anglers Association of Ireland*				N/A
Vision Sports Ireland	12	4	33%	N/A
Volleyball Association of Ireland	7	5	71%	N/A
Weightlifting Ireland	7	1	14%	N/A
Total:	635	182	29%	24%

**Not currently in receipt of Sport Ireland Funding*

+ The new organisation Golf Ireland will be included in future updates

Ends.

Further Information:

For further information or to arrange interviews with Nora Stapleton or Lynne Cantwell contact:

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Notes to the Editor:

Date for the Diary: Thursday 19th March 2020

The Olympic Federation of Ireland, with the support of Sport Ireland's Women in Sport investment, will host a one day Gender Equality Conference in the Ballsbridge Hotel, Dublin, from 9.00am – 4.30pm.

The conference is welcomed by Sport Ireland and is another example of Women in Sport investment being utilised to advance gender equality in the sports sector.

Sarah Keane, President of the Olympic Federation of Ireland and Chair of the European Olympic Committees Gender Equality Commission said, *“The International line up of various high profile Olympic family male and female key note speakers and panel delegates will no doubt lend itself to some really interesting discussions and we hope delegates will walk away with some concrete actions from the conference. Gender Equality is about having equal representation across all areas and sport should be no different.*

“We look forward to welcoming the lead representatives from the NGB's and in particular those from the top down who can make changes on Women in Sport within their organisations and those who are interested to take action and continue on our gender balance journey. The support from Sport Ireland is greatly appreciated and we are excited about this event.”

Further information on the conference please contact linda@olympicsport.ie