

Chasing Equity:

The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women



Our Mission

We are the ally, advocate and catalyst for tomorrow's leaders. We exist to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sports and life.

Letter from the CEO

THE TIME FOR EQUITY IS NOW

At the Women's Sports Foundation, we recognize that knowledge is power. The WSF's latest report, *Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women* shines a light on the current landscape for girls and women in sport reflected in the latest data from nearly 500 research reports and results from a new national survey of more than 2,300 women working in women's sport. Taking stock of where we are in achieving gender equity in sport requires study, transparency and candor. This groundbreaking report brings together the latest facts and milestones and elevates the voices of women offering fresh insight and perspective. Importantly the report includes calls to action to help propel momentum for change. Stakeholders in all areas of sport, from grassroots to high school, college and elite athletics, collegiate administrators, coaches, policymakers, leaders in the corporate and media sectors all have a critical role to play. The WSF is committed to keeping these conversations at the forefront and working collaboratively with others to accelerate the pace of change.

Continued progress depends on comprehensive, up-to-date information in real time. Only when we operate from a shared understanding of the landscape can we ensure thoughtful conversation and sound decision-making necessary for progress. From playing fields to board rooms, girls and women continue to live out their passion for sport. As these accomplishments are celebrated, let's continue to examine the gaps and opportunities to ensure that all girls and all women can get in the game. Only then will we be able to realize the full potential unleashed by sport. All girls. All women. All sports.



Dr. Deborah Antoine, CEO, Women's Sports Foundation

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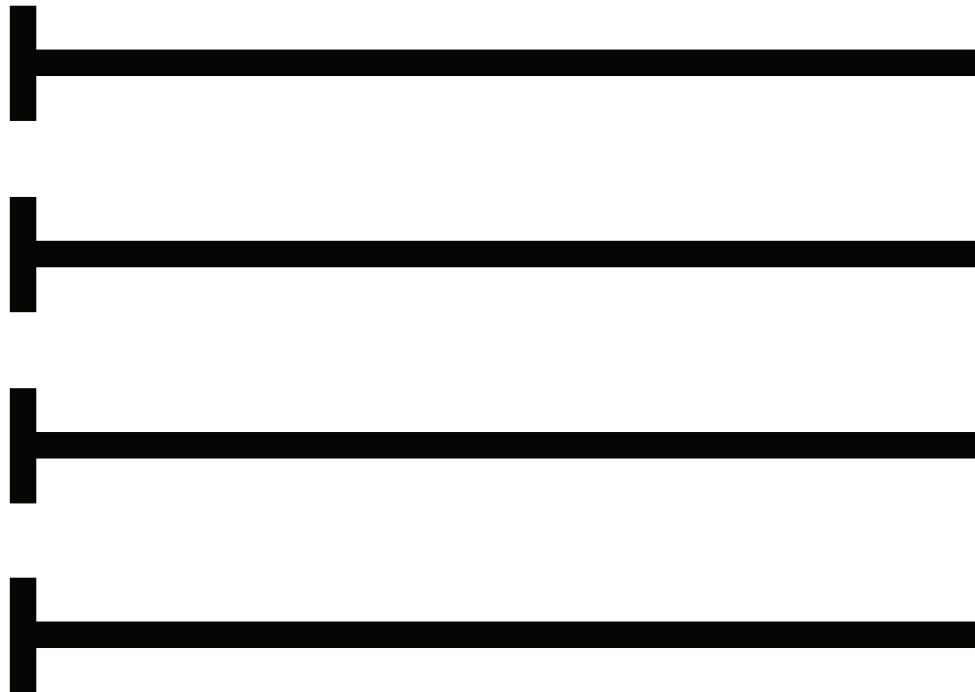
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About the Women's Sports Foundation

The Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sports and life. We are an ally, an advocate and a catalyst. Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we strengthen and expand participation and leadership opportunities through research, advocacy, community programming and a wide variety of collaborative partnerships. The Women's Sports Foundation has positively shaped the lives of millions of youth, high school and collegiate student-athletes, elite athletes and coaches. We're building a future where every girl and woman can #KeepPlaying and unlock the lifelong benefits of sport participation. *All girls. All women. All sports.* To learn more about the Women's Sports Foundation, please visit www.WomensSportsFoundation.org

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Executive Summary

During the summer of 2019, the harvest of seeds of women’s empowerment sown in the U.S. sport system nearly 50 years earlier with the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was on full display for the world to see. The U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team (USWNT) was chasing its fourth Women’s World Cup title in decisive fashion in Lyon, France. That same weekend, the U.S. Softball Team put in a gold-medal-winning performance at the USA International Softball Cup and the U.S. Women’s Volleyball Team won the FIVB Nations League Championship (Andrejev, 2019).

Tennis star Serena Williams, two years after having her first child, was back at Wimbledon finishing second in women’s singles competition while pairing with Scottish player Andy Murray in mixed doubles. The University of California at Los Angeles women’s softball team won their 12th Women’s College World Series title. And U.S. women’s gymnast Simone Biles continued to elevate the sport by becoming the first in history to land a double-twisting, double-somersault dismount off of the balance beam and a triple-double in floor exercise at the 2019 U.S. Gymnastics Championship, winning her sixth national title in the process (Armour, 2019; Asmelash & Muaddi, 2019). She followed this performance by extending her record-setting world medal total to 25 (Clarke, 2019).

Along the way, records were set not only in terms of team and individual athlete performances but also in economic and cultural impact. Inspiring a boost in Nike team apparel sales, USWNT home soccer jerseys outpaced sales for men’s jerseys (Mello, 2019). According to an official licensed seller, Fanatics, “...this is the top-selling U.S. Soccer national team jersey, men’s or women’s, of all time, with sales more than 500% greater this year vs. the same period (through the semifinals) in 2015” (VanHaaren, 2019). In 2019, across 17 games, including the Women’s World Cup championship game against the Netherlands, the team drew an average viewing audience of 2,706,412 per game (Dockery, 2019). Just under 14 million viewers watched the final game on Fox Sports (Dockery, 2019). Worldwide, a record 1.12 billion viewers tuned into the tournament (Glass, 2019).

Even as U.S. women athletes shone on the world stage, the spotlight was trained not only on their accomplishments but also on the barriers that they faced as they ascended to the best in the world. While the USWNT battled on the field for their place in soccer history at the Women’s World Cup, prevailing over Netherlands to win their fourth championship and second in a row, they were battling their own federation at home over equal pay and other

“I just think participation in sport does so much for the well-being of girls—it builds their confidence, helps manage stress/mental health, and prepares them to handle failure, knowing that the next day may be when they win. It is great preparation for a career.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

equal employment issues. This stark reality prompted 50 members of the U.S. Congress to write to the U.S. Federation expressing disapproval for indefensible treatment of the USWNT and demanding that a plan be implemented to address the lack of parity between the men’s and women’s teams (Spier, Frankel, Lawrence, Escobar, & Haaland, 2019). All of that was happening under the dark shadow cast by the failures of U.S. sport federations, college athletic programs, youth sport organizations, and sport media companies to protect female athletes and female employees from sexual assault and harassment and to respond empathetically and appropriately when sexual violence against girls and women occurred (Cook, 2018b; Guinee, 2019; North, 2019; Tracy, 2019).

In this report, we examine the state of girls’ and women’s sport in the United States through a broad lens, looking at the triumphs, the challenges, and the tremendous opportunities that are yet to be realized. The areas we focus on include sport participation opportunities for girls and women; the benefits of sport participation for girls and women; the barriers that limit and/or hinder participation; critical health and safety concerns of females in sport; Title IX and its ongoing role in supporting the infrastructure for equal access to sport participation for girls and women; the representation of women working in the sport industry and the climate they encounter while working in sport, including pay equity and equal treatment issues; the level and quality of sport media coverage of female athletes; and the representation of women working in sport media.

The information presented in this report draws upon both primary and secondary sources. A team of researchers conducted an extensive literature review of nearly 500 research studies and reports from scholars, sport governing bodies and public policy organizations; a review of public reports filed by colleges and universities, including selected lawsuits; and a review of media reports primarily spanning the time period between 2014–19 with the goal of identifying, gathering, analyzing, and reporting facts and findings that describe the realities for girls and women in sport in the United States.

Using these findings, we developed calls to action that address perennial issues that have held girls and women back from participating and working in U.S. sport as fully enfranchised peers and colleagues of boys and men. To supplement this effort, we also undertook a nationally representative survey of U.S. female sport leaders (N=2,356) from across all sectors of girls’ and women’s sport (youth, high school, college, elite/Olympic, and professional) to gauge their thoughts about where progress has been made, where things have stalled, and what steps they recommend be taken to empower girls and women further as participants and as workers within sport organizations in the United States. Selected findings from that survey are interwoven throughout this report.

Sport participation is critical to empowering U.S. girls and women. While there are legions of studies that document the physical, psychological, social, and academic benefits of consistent participation in physical activity and sport as detailed in Table 1, these findings cannot be emphasized enough. Girls and women reap significant benefits from sport participation that are both immediate and long-term, and ensuring that all U.S. girls and women have access to sport and physical activity is key to the health and the success of the nation.

Outlined in this executive summary are 10 key highlights from the report.

1. Making Headway: Access for Girls is on the Rise

When examined in its totality, with all sectors of sport from youth through professional levels considered, girls and women have improved access to sport opportunities. Girls across the United States participate in a wide array of sport programs offered by organizations with school-based, community-based, church-based, travel-based, or other affiliations (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Girls participate in not only traditional youth sports like Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball or American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) soccer programs but also sport programs that combine sports with positive youth development lessons (e.g., Girls on the Run).

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), girls’ high school sport participation reached an all-time high for the 29th consecutive year in the United States, with 3,415,306 opportunities for girls to compete in high school sports in 2017–18, and only dropped slightly in 2018–19 to 3,402,733 (NFHS, 2019). Girls have 42.9% of all high school opportunities.

During the 2017–18 season, there were 216,378 female athletic opportunities offered by National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) member institutions (44.2%), representing a 291% increase from 1981–82 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

The representation of American women in the 2016 Olympic Games was unprecedented, with the U.S. delegation of 292 women being the largest in Olympic history (Houghton, Pieper, & Smith, 2018). The Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), the longest-running women’s professional team sport league in the world, celebrated its 23rd consecutive season in existence in 2019. The U.S. National Women’s Soccer Team won the Women’s World Cup for a record fourth time, and the tournament will be expanded from 24 to 32 teams by 2023. Across the board, more girls and women are accessing the significant benefits of sports participation.

Table 1: Benefits of Sport Participation

Physical Benefits	Social/Emotional Benefits	Academic/Leadership Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower risk of obesity • Lower blood pressure • Higher levels of cardio-respiratory fitness • Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease • Reduced risk of breast cancer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved psychological well-being • Greater life satisfaction • Stronger sense of belonging • Improved self-esteem • Reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved academic achievement • Higher high school graduation rates • Higher college attendance and retention • Greater involvement in extracurricular activities • Opportunities for leadership and learning

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

2. Closing the Divide: Gender Gap in Participation Persists

Girls enter sports later, participate in fewer numbers, and exit earlier than boys (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). As a general trend, between the ages of 6 to 10, girls' participation in sport lags behind that of boys by 10 percentage points (Aspen Institute, 2018). In 2017, the sport participation gap had narrowed to 4% among eighth graders but is the largest at 14% among 12th graders (Meier, Benjamin, & Larson, 2018). Boys are also more likely than girls to play two or more sports (47% vs. 29%) (Zarrett, Veliz, & Sabo, 2018). Annually, boys receive more than 1.13 million more high school sports opportunities than girls (NFHS, 2019), and the gap between high school boys' and girls' participation has not significantly narrowed in the past 20 years (Zarrett et al., 2018).

At the college level, in 2017–18 women had 62,236 fewer participation opportunities than men in NCAA sports (NCAA, 2019).

At the professional level, there are so few viable opportunities in sports like women's volleyball and basketball, women have to pursue professional careers overseas. The 30 NBA teams can each have up to 15 players (NBA, 2019), while the 12 WNBA teams are limited to 12 roster spots (WNBA, 2019). The six National Pro Fastpitch Softball teams are limited to 26 players for a total of 156 players (Sievers, 2017), while the 30 Major League Baseball regular-season rosters are limited to 25 for a total of 750 players (MLB, 2019). Much work remains before fair access at all levels of sport is achieved.

3. Sport for All: More Resources Are Needed for Girls of Color and Other Marginalized Communities

Girls of color, girls of lower socioeconomic status, and girls in urban and rural areas often enter sports later, participate in lower numbers, and drop out earlier than White girls, suburban girls, and girls from higher socioeconomic status. For example, the drop-out rate for girls of color in urban centers is twice that of suburban White girls. By the age of 14, 24% of girls in urban areas dropped out, while 13% of girls from rural areas dropped out by this age, and 6% of girls from suburban areas dropped out by this age (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

In a comparison between White and African American girls, White girls were found to be three times more likely to be involved in sport through a private organization (21% to 7%). African American girls were more likely to participate in programs offered through schools (65%, compared to 50%) (Graves, Kaufmann, & Frolich, 2014). The disparate rates at which African American and White girls participate in physical activity have been attributed to African American girls being more likely to attend schools with fewer resources and higher poverty rates. This impacts material resources (gymnasiums and fields), human resources (coaches), and programs and opportunities to play. Because of the vast resource gaps available in typical heavily minority high schools (less than



Harlem Lacrosse

10% White enrollment), girls of color have access to far fewer athletic participation opportunities than students attending typical heavily White high schools (90% White enrollment) (National Women's Law Center, 2015b).

Youth from other marginalized groups also participate in sport in lower numbers. From a gender perspective, boys with disabilities consistently participate in sport at higher rates than girls with disabilities (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010). According to the NFHS (NFHS, 2019), of the 15,571 high school students who participated in adaptive sport activities during the 2018–19 academic year, 44% were female students (6,960). Girls in immigrant families report lower rates of sport participation than boys from similar families as many immigrant parents hold traditional attitudes towards gender roles (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Thul, LaVoi, Hazelwood, & Hussein, 2016; Thul, LaVoi, & Wasend, 2018). In a study by the Human Rights Campaign (2017), while 68% of all high school students participated in sport, only 29% of LGBTQ girls participated. Understanding the needs of underserved populations is critical to closing the participation gaps.

4. Measure for Measure: Title IX Compliance Falls Short

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 comprises 37 words that have had a profound impact on the educational experiences of students by generally barring sex discrimination in schools supported with federal funding and non-educational institutions that offer educational programming. Described by one author as the "little statute that could," Title IX helped to open the doors of opportunity for girls and women in previously male-dominated fields and professions, thus creating pathways for more girls to dream of becoming — and more women to become — astronauts, carpenters, executives, journalists, lawyers, mechanics, physicians, presidential candidates, military officers, and professional

athletes. As Title IX approaches its 50th birthday in 2022, there is no doubt that the law has had a major positive impact on the prospects and possibilities available for girls and women in sport. The work, however, is not yet done.

Gender gaps persist in the offering of athletic opportunities to female athletes and across every resource category in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA), National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), California Community College Athletic Association (CCCCAA), and other college and university athletic departments.

The vast majority of institutions across all three NCAA divisions – 87% or 943 of 1,084 institutions – offered disproportionately higher rates of athletic opportunities to male athletes compared to their enrollment. In 2017–18, only 8.6% of NCAA Division I institutions (30 of 348) offered athletic opportunities to female athletes proportional to their enrollment. Seventy percent of NCAA Division I schools (245 of 348) offered disproportionately higher numbers of athletic participation opportunities to male athletes, ranging from 2% to 34% above the proportion of male enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

While total spending on athletic scholarships in NCAA institutions in Divisions I and II was in excess of \$3 billion, with female athletes receiving 46%, male athletes received \$240,435,504 more in athletic scholarship assistance.

At the high school level, despite girls comprising nearly half of the student body (U.S. Department of Education, 2012), the 3.4 million opportunities for girls to play high school sports in 2017–18 fell well short of the 4.5 million opportunities for boys who played high school sports that year (NFHS, 2019). When all schools are compliant with Title IX, much of the participation gap will disappear.

5. Knowledge is Power: Title IX Enforcement Requires Education and Transparency

Every school in the United States receiving federal funding is required to designate a Title IX coordinator to oversee Title IX compliance and education efforts. According to a study of high school athletic administrators conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2017, an estimated 51% were either unaware of who their Title IX coordinator was or were unsupported by their Title IX coordinator. Being able to identify the Title IX coordinator is critical. In a study of nearly 1,100 college and university coaches, just over 30% were aware of who their Title IX coordinator was; 42.8% were not sure (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013).

The GAO reported that the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) officials were not aware of how closely Title IX coordinators worked with athletic administrators on Title IX compliance. In an interview with officials of an association that conducts Title IX trainings, it was the

view of the trainers that high school Title IX coordinators' familiarity with Title IX regulations pertaining to athletics was low (Nowicki, 2017). Knowledge of Title IX is low among athletes, coaches, and administrators (Weight & Staurowsky, 2014; Staurowsky, Zonder, & Reimer, 2017). In response to the question "what is Title IX?", nearly 40% of college athletes from NCAA Divisions I and III indicated that they did not know what Title IX is (N=210) (Staurowsky et al., 2017). According to Staurowsky and Weight (2013), 83% of college coaches (N=1,093) reported that they never received any formal training about Title IX as part of preparation for their jobs.

In an effort to foster transparency in terms of the allocation of opportunity and financial resources to men's and women's athletic programs, the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act (EADA) passed in 1994 requires colleges and universities to annually report participation data and budget allocations broken out by gender. As important as the EADA database has been in shedding light on how resources are allocated by gender within college and university athletic departments, there has been a concern that school administrators are not forthcoming in their self-reporting of information about their institutions. Recent court cases have raised questions as to whether athletic opportunities information has been falsified by some schools for the purpose of presenting a more favorable record in terms of complying with Title IX's three-part test (Staurowsky, 2018a; Staurowsky, 2018b). Title IX accountability is disabled if school administrators, athletic directors, coaches, athletes, parents, fans, media, and others are uninformed or misinformed about what the law requires (Nowicki, 2017; Staurowsky & Weight, 2011; Staurowsky & Weight, 2013; Weight & Staurowsky, 2014).

6. Cracking the Code: Gender Role Beliefs Endure

Pressures to adhere to narrow gender norms and gender-role stereotypes still influence the way female athletes are viewed and valued and the way that female athletes who do not conform to gender-role scripts are treated. In a national study of 814 parents, it was found that they tended to place a somewhat higher value on sport for their sons than their daughters (YouGov America, Inc., 2017). Gender-role beliefs held by parents played a small but significant part in the way parents viewed their daughters' participation in sport and the types of sports their daughters played (Heinze et al., 2017).

Peer pressure to conform to gender norms is also at play. In a survey of girls (Zarrett, Cooky, & Veliz, 2019), over one-third (32%) of the girls reported that sometimes boys made fun of them or made them feel uncomfortable while they practiced. Nearly one-third of girls (31%) expressed that appearance-related reasons were part of their motivation for their participation.

Findings from several studies indicate that African American female athlete concerns about their hair and appearance are barriers to participation

(Woolford, Woolford-Hunt, Sami, Blake, & Williams, 2016; Wright, Griffes, & Gould, 2017; Rice, Hambrick, & Aicher, 2018), and Latina girls cite gender-related teasing and self-consciousness as cause for discomfort in participating in sport (Lopez, 2019).

For trans female athletes (athletes who identify as female but were assigned male at birth) and other non-gender-conforming athletes, overt discrimination and prejudice from peers as well as officials discourages participation and subjects them to hostile climates.

In an analysis of physical activity disparities between heterosexual and sexual minority youth between the ages of 12 and 22 years using data from the U.S. Growing Up Today study, Calzo et al. (2014) found that sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, mostly heterosexual) were 46%-76% less likely to participate in team sports than their same-sex heterosexual peers. Intolerance to gender non-conformity was identified as a key barrier to participation. According to a survey conducted by Dennison & Kitchen (2015), 84% of Americans indicated that they either witnessed or experienced anti-LGBT attitudes in sport.

Immigrant girls also face barriers. Girls in immigrant families report lower rates of sport participation than boys in similar families since many immigrant parents hold traditional attitudes towards gender roles (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Thul et al., 2016; Thul et al., 2018). These girls may be less likely to participate in sport, as immigrant parents tend to have negative attitudes towards their daughters' sport participation (Strandbu, Bakken, & Sletten, 2019). Beliefs driven by stereotypes and discrimination continue to keep many girls and women from fully participating in sport.

7. In the Spotlight: Headlines Call Out Abusive Behavior

Given the unique aspects of the sport environment, female athletes are vulnerable to verbal, emotional, and sexual abuse. Due to the power imbalance and authoritarian nature of sport, scholars argue athletics is a prime climate for the abuse of athletes (Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Kerr & Stirling, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2013). A meta-analysis conducted on literature that examined non-accidental violence in sport found that "non-accidental violence is a pervasive and protracted issue affecting athletes of all types and ages, though children, elite athletes and those from stigmatized groups (e.g., women, LGBTQ, gender non-conforming, and athletes with disabilities) are more vulnerable to non-accidental violence." (Roberts, Sojo, & Grant, 2019).

Recently, an awakening has occurred as a result of highly publicized cases of hundreds of female and male athletes suffering sexual abuse by coach and sports medicine predators and testifying in very public ways to the failures of sport officials and organizations to protect them and their fellow athletes. There is growing awareness that sexual abuse in its many forms, from sex abuse to sexual

harassment to sexual assault to interpersonal violence to rape, occurs across the expanse of sport spaces and can be perpetrated by individuals in positions of authority (e.g., administrators, performance directors, coaches, members of the media, parents, sports medicine personnel) or may occur between athlete peers and between colleagues (Parent & Fortier, 2018). The most prominent sex abuse scandal in sports involved the USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University team doctor, Larry Nassar. Nassar abused and assaulted 265 known individuals over 25 years (BBC News, 2018; Mencarini, 2018). It became clear that countless adults in gymnastics centers across the country, USA Gymnastics high-ranking officials, and Michigan State University's athletic department and administration failed each and every victim Nassar abused. Winning and the pursuit of gold was prioritized over these girls' and young women's well-being and safety.

While there is much more to be known about the extent of the harm done to athletes individually and collectively throughout the U.S. sport system, female athletes and women working in the sport industry have been particularly vulnerable to this violence and have had to live with its negative impacts (Fasting, Brackenridge, Kjølborg, 2013; Vertommen et al, 2018). Sexual abuse in athletics is not relegated to coaches and athletes. As discussions continue on how to make sport environments safe for athletes and those who work in them, the data make a compelling case for why these issues must be at the top of agendas for public policy makers, sport administrators, parents, law enforcement, and media.

8. Managing Risk: Unique Health Needs and Injuries Can Sideline Girls and Women

While there is no question that participation in sport presents a multitude of benefits for girls and women that can last a lifetime, participation in any kind of activity can pose health and safety concerns. As a result, it is critical to be aware of vulnerabilities in the sport system that pose potential threats to female athletes and to be responsive to their needs.

From a mental health perspective, due to links between sleep and depression, female athletes may be more vulnerable to depression and anxiety symptoms (Stracciolini, McCracken, Milewski, & Meehan, 2019). In a study of 465 athletes who competed on NCAA-sponsored teams, nearly a third of the women in the study demonstrated signs of depression compared to 18% of men (Wolanin, Hong, Marks, Pancho, & Gross, 2016). Data from NCAA surveys from 2008 and 2012 showed that 48% of female collegiate athletes reported having depression or anxiety symptoms (Brown, Hainline, Kroshus, & Wilfert, 2014).

Female athletes are vulnerable to a medical condition known as the Female Athlete Triad, which includes three components: low energy availability (with or without

disordered eating), menstrual dysfunction, and low bone density. Female athletes who may train too hard and/or have complicated relationships with food (e.g., restricting food intake and types of food, binge eating, and/or purging) risk long-term issues with osteoporosis, bone fractures, diminished physical performance, and a range of psychological issues (depression, anxiety, body dysmorphia, obsession with body size, food anxiety, etc.) (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist, 2017).

Research has shown over the years that female athletes experience some sports injuries, including anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries and concussions, at higher rates than male athletes. One study reported the sport of women's soccer had an ACL injury rate of 2.55 per 10,000 athlete-exposures (AE), which was substantially higher than the men's soccer rate of 0.63 per 10,000 AE. The researchers found a comparable disparity in the sport of basketball (1.95 per 10,000 AE for women versus 0.70 per 10,000 AE for men) (Stanley, Kerr, Dompier, & Padua, 2016). At the collegiate level, researchers examined the sex differences in concussion injury rates as reported through the NCAA Injury Surveillance Program. Between 2004-05 and 2008-09, there were 1,702 concussions reported. Further analysis revealed that female athletes

had a 1.4 times higher overall concussion injury rate than male athletes. Women's baseball/softball, basketball, ice hockey, and soccer had the greatest injury rates. Additionally, when comparing female and male soccer and basketball players, the female players suffered more time loss after concussion (Covassin, Moran, & Elbin, 2016). Several things account for female athletes being at greater risk for concussions in most sports, including head-neck strength and the mechanism of injury (Covassin, Bretzin, & Fox, 2019a). The limited knowledge of female-specific health and injury concerns places girls and women at greater risk and can hinder their persistence in sport.

9. Careers on the Line: Confronting Workplace Bias and Wage Gaps

While the U.S. National Women's Soccer Team's legal battle with the U.S. Soccer Federation over equal pay and equal treatment was arguably the most covered equal pay dispute in women's sport in 2019, women athletes across professional leagues, including the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), and women working in youth, college, and professional sport face stark gender inequity in opportunity, pay, and treatment. The juxtaposition of the increase of female sport participation over time with the decrease in the



WSF Founder *Billie Jean King*

representation of women in sport leadership positions in some sectors of the industry (e.g., high school and college athletic departments) and the slow integration of workplaces in other sectors (e.g., professional men's sport leagues) is an enduring paradox of women working in the sport industry. There has been an expectation that as more girls and women moved into the playing ranks that there would eventually be a proportional increase in hiring women as coaches, administrators, and sport executives, but this has not happened.

As the most recent Race and Gender Report cards from the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport reveal, women are underrepresented in positions of power or influence at senior leadership levels across all professional team sports (Lapchick, 2019a; Lapchick, 2029b; Lapchick, 2019c; Lapchick, Estrella, & Gerhart, 2019). There has been a precipitous decline in the number of female head coaches in college women's sports (43% in 2017 vs. 90% in 1971) (Sabo, Veliz, & Staurowsky, 2016). Emblematic of this problematic hiring and retention pattern, less than a quarter (24%) of all head coaches at the college level are women (NCAA, 2019a). And of the 9,365 NCAA head coaches of men's teams in 2016–17, only 465 were women (5%). This pattern reveals how some of the most lucrative and often prestigious leadership positions in sport, college coaching, are difficult for women to attain (LaVoi, 2019).

Women also hold a limited number of other leadership positions in intercollegiate sport, including at the athletic director level in NCAA Division I (11%), Division II (18%), and Division III (31%). Nearly 80% of athletic directors running college sports across all divisions (NCAA Division I, II, and III) are men (NCAA, 2019a). Indicative of systemic gender bias that negatively impacts women, Sabo, Veliz, and Staurowsky (2016) found that about two-thirds (65%) of current college coaches felt that it was easier for men to get top-level coaching jobs.

Efforts have been made within the Olympic movement to achieve gender equity among athletes, yet women in leadership positions in international sport have not kept pace. Women compose 29% of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) membership (Lapchick, Davison, Grant, & Quiarte, 2016). In the United States, Olympic and Paralympic Committee representation of women stands at 37.5% of all members (Houghton et al., 2018). In the most recent data compiled internally by the Women's Sports Foundation in the summer of 2019, 33% (199 of 594) of the positions available on the boards of U.S. national governing bodies (NGBs) for summer teams were held by women. Women also held 33% of the positions on U.S. NGBs for winter sports (39 of 119). Of the 66 "main coaches" for the U.S. team at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, eight (12.1%) were female, seven of whom coached figure skating or ice dancing. This is a slight increase from the 2014 Games when women held 8.5% of "main coach" positions (Houghton et al., 2018).

At its most basic, the health of the U.S. sport system can be measured in the way it treats its women workers occupying myriad roles as administrators, athletes, coaches, entrepreneurs, executives, fundraisers, marketers, members of the media, and owners. Although the sport industry has met some major milestones in achieving gender parity — with increasing efforts to diversify the workplace yielding increasing numbers of women hired into top positions within professional sport franchises, national sport governing bodies, and major college conferences — significant hurdles remain.

Most women are not impacted at the penultimate point in their sport career, but instead the barriers and challenges they face cause many to leave at multiple points along their career paths, leading to a reduced pipeline or smaller pool of qualified candidates to draw upon when senior level positions open (Hancock & Hums, 2016). The glass ceiling can be evident at multiple stages of a career progression, but it often is perceived as an impenetrable barrier, causing women who have reached this point to select a different career path or field altogether.

The Female Leaders in Sport Survey respondents reported gender bias in the workplace and a gender dynamic that negatively impacted their productivity and employment. An earlier study found that three-quarters (75%) of female college coaches said that men had an easier time negotiating salary increases, more than half (54%) believed that men are more likely to be promoted, to secure a multiyear contract upon hiring (52%), and to be rewarded with salary increases for successful performance (53%) (Sabo et al., 2016). Although progress has been made, women are still a long way from fair compensation and treatment.

10. Under the Radar: Fair Media Coverage Remains Illusive

One of the longstanding trends in the research on gender, sport, and media is the underrepresentation of women's sports and the objectification and trivialization of sportswomen in media (Bruce, 2016; Thorpe, Toffoletti, & Bruce, 2017). With minor exceptions during international competitive events (what scholars term "sports mega-events") such as the FIFA Women's World Cup (Bell & Coche, 2018; Petty & Pope, 2019) and the Olympic Games (Arth, Hou, Rush, & Angelini, 2018; Houghton et al., 2018), as well as local news (Kaiser, 2018) or niche media outlets (Wolter, 2015), the vast majority of sport media coverage centers on men's sports (Billings & Young, 2015; Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Eagleman, Pedersen & Wharton, 2009; Hull, 2017; Kane, LaVoi, & Fink, 2013; Turner, 2014; Weber & Carini, 2013).

Longitudinal research examining the coverage of men's and women's sports on televised news and highlight shows has found that the coverage of women's sports has actually declined over the 25-year time period (1989–2014)

with only 3.2% of coverage devoted to women's sports in 2014 (Cooky et al., 2015). According to that same study, ESPN's SportsCenter devoted 1.3–2.2% of its coverage to women's sports during a 15-year time period (1999–2014).

Recent research examining online and social media also indicate similar trends in coverage, with the majority of content devoted to male athletes and men's sports. For example, a recent study examined 1,587 Instagram images from the primary accounts of the four major American sports networks and found women's coverage lags significantly behind men's.

The researchers also noted how sportswomen are more likely to appear alongside their male counterparts in culturally "appropriate" sports and in nonathletic roles (Romney & Johnson, 2019). Sports media coverage often minimizes sportswomen's athleticism (Kian & Clavio, 2011) and represents women and female athletes as sexual objects (Messner & Montez de Oca, 2005; Kane, 2011; Kim & Sagas, 2014). Moreover, men's sports are often produced in more visually exciting ways through the use of more camera angles, diversity of shot types, and the use of graphics and special effects (Greer, Hardin, & Homan, 2009; Cooky et al., 2015).

Studies increasingly include an intersectional perspective offering nuanced understandings of how coverage and representation of sportswomen is shaped by racial identities and other social locations. For example, media portrayals of elite athletes with disabilities reflect similar patterns in terms of less coverage being devoted to female athletes, so, due to the negligible coverage of athletes with disabilities in general, female athletes with disabilities are rendered nearly invisible by the press (Rees, Robinson, & Shields, 2019). Scholars have noted hypersexual racialized portrayals of sportswomen of color (Shultz, 2005; Cooky, Wachs, Messner, & Dworkin, 2010), and sportswomen of color competing in the Olympic Games were more likely to experience racist and sexist microaggressions in the media when compared to their White counterparts (Frisby, 2017).

There are a number of factors to explain the above trends in the coverage of women's sports. Certainly, hegemonic masculinity embedded in sports and sports cultures, as well as sexism, play a role (Fink, 2015a; Bruce 2015). In addition, scholars and women's sports advocates have suggested the lack of women in journalist, broadcaster, and commentator roles in sports media as well as the lack of women in decision-making positions or leadership positions within sports media may help to explain the continued dominance of coverage of men's sports (Cooky et al., 2015; Laucella, Hardin, Bien-Aimé, & Antunovic, 2017). According to a recent report, the 75 newspapers and websites examined all received an F for gender hiring practices. The report found 90% of sports editors, 69.9% of sports assistant sports editors, 83.4% of columnists, 88.5% of reporters, and 79.6% of copy editors/designers were men (and the vast majority, White men) (Lapchick, 2018).

Simply hiring women may not sufficiently address the problem given that once women are hired, they often leave the industry in what's been termed a "revolving door" in sports journalism. This may be in part due to the working cultures of sports media outlets, which still tend to be masculine-identified (regardless of the numerical proportions of women and men employees) as well as the harassment women in sports media professions encounter (Antunovic, 2018). Without fair media coverage of women's sports, role models are invisible and girls and women may conclude there is little cultural value assigned to their participation in sports.

Conclusion

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Title IX's passage, there is no better time for girls and women to participate and work in sport in the United States. The triumphs of U.S. women athletes around the world who represent the very best of what the nation has to offer provide tangible proof of the heights to which women can achieve when afforded equitable access to opportunity and the very real impact those women's achievements have on the aspirations of future generations. Progress, however, cannot be met with complacency because the data are clear. For all of the progress that has been made in advancing the interests of girls and women in the U.S. sport system, women athletes and women sport leaders are still confronted with challenges that impede their full and fair access to play, compete, and work; contribute to work and play environments that are unwelcoming; and leave girls and women too often chasing equity. This report does not present merely a statement of problems, but also provides readily implementable and accessible calls to action that athletes, citizens, coaches, change makers, game changers, members of the media, parents, public policy makers, and sport executives can adopt and move forward so that we can get beyond girls and women in sport chasing equity to simply chasing their dreams.

There is much that can be done to address the myriad issues identified in this report. Beginning on page 66 are calls to action to increase and improve sport participation opportunities for girls and women; to break down barriers that prevent girls and women from participating fully in sport, especially girls and women from marginalized groups; to improve and enhance Title IX compliance at the high school and college levels; to address equal treatment in sport workplaces and continue to promote women in sport leadership roles; and to increase media coverage of women's sport.

Full Report Introduction

During the summer of 2019, the harvest from the seeds of women's empowerment sown in the United States sport system nearly 50 years earlier with the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was on full display for the world to see. The U.S. Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) was chasing its fourth Women's World Cup title in decisive fashion in Lyon, France. That same weekend, the U.S. Softball Team put in a gold-medal-winning performance at the USA International Softball Cup, and the U.S. Women's Volleyball Team won the FIVB Nations League Championship (Andrejev, 2019). Tennis star Serena Williams, two years after having her first child, was back at Wimbledon finishing second in women's singles competition while pairing with Scottish player Andy Murray in mixed doubles. The University of California at Los Angeles women's softball team won their 12th Women's College World Series title. And U.S. women's gymnast Simone Biles continued to elevate the sport by becoming the first in history to land a double-twisting, double-somersault dismount off of the balance beam at the 2019 U.S. Gymnastics Championship, in the process winning her sixth national championship (Asmelash & Muaddi, 2019). She followed this by extending her record-setting world medal total to 24 (Clarke, 2019).

Along the way, records were set not just in terms of team and individual athlete performances but also in economic and cultural impact. Inspiring a boost in Nike team apparel sales, USWNT home soccer jerseys outpaced sales for men's jerseys (Mello, 2019). According to an official licensed seller, Fanatics, "...this is the top-selling U.S. Soccer national team jersey, men's or women's, of all time, with sales more than 500% greater this year vs. the same period (through the semifinals) in 2015" (VanHaaren, 2019). In 2019, across 17 games, including the Women's World Cup championship game against the Netherlands, the team drew an average audience of 2,706,412 per game (Dockery, 2019).¹ Just under 14 million viewers watched the final game on Fox Sports (Dockery, 2019). Worldwide, a record 1.12 billion viewers tuned into the tournament.

In turn, long-time tennis analyst Pam Shriver considered the pairing of Williams and Murray as the "most talked-about mixed doubles draw in the history of tennis" (Maine, 2019). And according to Sports Media Watch, the Women's College World Series (WCWS) final game between UCLA and Oklahoma was the fourth most-watched baseball or softball game on cable television, only falling behind Sunday Night Baseball games

¹ The 17 games noted here were broadcast on one of these channels: ESPN2, Fox Sports 1 (F1), or FOX.

featuring Major League Baseball (MLB) teams the Red Sox and Yankees; Atlanta and Philadelphia; and the Cardinals and Cubs (Paulsen, 2019).

Even as U.S. women athletes shone on the world stage, the spotlight focused not only on their accomplishments but also on the barriers that they faced as they ascended to the best in the world. While the USWNT battled on the field for their place in soccer history at the Women's World Cup, prevailing over Netherlands to win their fourth championship and second in a row, they were battling their own federation at home over equal pay and other equal employment issues. This stark reality prompted 50 members of the U.S. Congress to write to the U.S. Federation expressing disapproval for indefensible treatment of the USWNT and demanding that a plan be implemented to address the lack of parity between the men's and women's teams (Spier, Frankel, Lawrence, Escobar, & Haaland, 2019). And they were not alone. American middle distance runner Alysia Montano (2019), a gold medalist in both the World Relay Championships and the Pan Am Games in 2015, brought attention to the fact that companies like Nike and Burton, key sponsors of elite female athletes, had a policy of reducing pay if female athletes got pregnant and made no provisions for female athletes dealing with pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity issues. In response to Montano's concerns, Nike clarified that they had adopted a new policy regarding support for pregnant athletes and that the terms of that policy would be written into new endorsement agreements with female athletes (Safdar, 2019). All of that was happening under the dark shadow cast by the failures of U.S. sport federations, college athletic programs, youth sport organizations, and sport media companies to protect female athletes and female employees from sexual assault and harassment and to respond empathetically and appropriately when sexual violence against girls and women occurred (Cook, 2018b; Guinee, 2019; North, 2019; Tracy, 2019).

This report addresses five broad areas: participation of girls and women in U.S. sport; the benefits of sport participation for girls and women; barriers that limit and/or hinder participation; Title IX and athletics enforcement; and women working in the sport industry and sport media. Each part of the report has been organized into two or three sections: an overview and sampling of selected findings; complementary findings from our survey where appropriate; and a list of recommended calls to action.

Purpose, Design & Method

The purpose of this report is to present an overview of the status of girls and women in sport in the United States and perceptions of women leaders of women's sport, including areas of progress and barriers to success. The information presented in this report draws upon both primary and secondary sources. A team of nine researchers conducted an extensive literature review of 453 research studies, reports from sport governing bodies and public policy organizations; a review of public reports filed by colleges and universities in accordance with the Equity in Disclosure Act (EADA); selected lawsuits; and media reports primarily spanning the time period between 2014-19 with the goal of identifying, gathering, analyzing, and reporting facts and findings that describe the realities for girls and women in sport in the United States. The result is this compendium, which focuses on sport participation opportunities for girls and women; the benefits of sport participation for girls and women; barriers that limit and/or hinder participation, as well as critical health and safety concerns; Title IX and its ongoing role in supporting the infrastructure for equal access to sport participation for girls and women; the representation of women working in the sport industry and the climate they encounter while working in sport, including pay equity and equal treatment issues; and the level and quality of sport media coverage of female athletes and the representation of women working in sport media.

In an effort to capture the perceptions of female leaders on the landscape for U.S. girls and women in sports, probe the impact of persistent barriers to progress and identify steps to be taken to move beyond those barriers, the primary research component of this study was a survey of female leaders in women's sports in the United States. The concept for the survey was initially advised by the work of O'Reilly, Brunette, and Bradish (2018). The 31-question survey (See Appendix on page 71), organized into four sections (demographics, barriers and opportunities in areas of sport participation, barriers and opportunities for women sport leaders, and open-ended questions inviting respondents to offer their thoughts on solutions and Calls to Action) was reviewed by members of a Women's Sports Foundation expert panel (N=24), and the survey was approved for distribution by the Drexel University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Using the online data collection platform of Qualtrics, the survey was administered using a snowball sampling method. Through the Women's Sports Foundation's relationships, U.S. women leaders of women's sports were contacted through academic associations, national sport governing bodies, professional sport organizations, and youth sport organizations as well as on social media

"I am a product of a lifetime of competitive athletics and I can honestly and truly say that athletics changed my life and gave me purpose...which I have now translated into a career!"

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

platforms. The data collected through the survey were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analyses.

The 2,356 U.S. female sport leaders who responded to the survey served in these roles: head coaches (25.62%), director/manager/assistant-associate athletic directors (23.05%), executives, owners, or senior athletic directors (11.11%), academic/researchers (9.72%), assistant or associate coaches (7.81%), board members (4.23%), journalists (4.65%), and sports medicine professionals (3.47%). Approximately 10% of respondents held other positions. The vast majority of respondents came from the college level (49.08%). The remainder came from these sectors: youth sport (14.52%), high school (13.40%), professional (7.85%), elite/amateur/Olympics (6.3%), and city/recreational league (5.24%) and other (3.61%). The average age of the women sport leaders who responded to the survey was 45 years of age, and, on average, they had been working or volunteering in sport for at least 10 years. The racial composition of the group of women leaders responding to the survey was primarily White (82.81%) followed by Black or African American (7.28%), Hispanic or Latina (4.15%), Mixed Race (1.89%), Asian (1.56%), American Indian or Alaska Native (.66%), and Native Hawaiian (.37%) and other (.29). Just under one percent of respondents did not wish to indicate their race.²

The responses from these U.S. women sport leaders were used in two ways within the report. They were used to highlight and illuminate research findings found through the literature review and to provide depth and dimension to the recommended calls to actions proposed in the report.

² Because the survey was distributed through multiple channels (email distribution as well as on social media), it is difficult to accurately determine a response rate for each group.

Part 1. Sport Participation for Girls & Women in the U.S.

A. Participation Opportunities for Girls and Women in the U.S.

Whether in mixed-sex teams or all-girl environments, girls seek places to explore their passion for playing, learning new sports, engaging in competition, and feeling the camaraderie that comes from being a member of a team. The WSF report *Coaching Through a Gender Lens: Maximizing Girls Play and Potential* (Zarrett, Cooky, & Veliz, 2019) found that coaches who offered girls realistic goals and challenges to strive for and who created positive environments where girls felt supported by the coach and each other fueled girls' enthusiasm for the sports they played.

Some research continues to show that all-female sport environments can facilitate higher levels of comfort, raise confidence levels, and increase the levels of physical activity participation when compared to mixed-gender environments (Bean, Forneris, & Fortier, 2015). However, the mythology that girls can only thrive in single-sex sport environments has been debunked as growing numbers of girls and boys over generations have played together on T-ball teams, at soccer camps, in physical education classes, and in other settings (Channon et al., 2016; Eldred, 2019).

The offering of mixed-sex teams provides an avenue for boys and girls to play in communities where there isn't enough support for sex-segregated teams. Sex-integrated teams also represent expanded sport opportunities for female athletes. Those who support mixed-sex teams argue that such environments hold the potential to foster mutual respect, more appreciation, and greater understanding (Channon et al., 2016; Eldred, 2019). Mixed-sex teams also have the potential and capability of providing a showcase to demonstrate that female athletes are the equal of male athletes. As Goldschmied and Kowalczyk (2014) found after looking at seven years of data about female and male athletes in the sport of riflery who competed in NCAA championships in mixed competition, there was no statistical difference in performance between those athletes on the basis of gender. In their reflection on the future of women's sport, Hall and Oglesby (2016) recommended that it was time to "think anew about sex-segregated competition categories" (p. 272).

Girls enjoy participation opportunities at all levels from grassroots and youth sport to professional sport in the U.S. While there is much more work to be done, progress has been made in fostering more inclusive sport spaces

"When someone says 'you play like a girl,' ask them 'which one?'"

**— U.S. Women's Soccer player
Mallory Pugh**

for girls from marginalized groups in some sectors of the industry. According to female sport leaders in our survey for this report, the climate for immigrant girls; girls of color; girls with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) girls; and gender non-conforming girls has gotten better or much better from 10 years ago in some areas (see table below for details), but there are also pockets where climates have remained what they were and in some cases, gotten worse. Overall, the views of our women sport leaders precisely reflect what scholar Vikki Krane (2019), who has studied LGBTQ issues in sport for decades recently wrote, "...there is evidence in today's sport culture that there are highly inclusive climates, highly prejudicial climates, and a myriad of climates in between" (p. 3) (see table below for details).

Although many sport opportunities coincide with educational experiences, the emphasis placed on participation in physical activity outside the school setting provides girls and women many of the same benefits as school-based sport participation.³ From the grassroots to professional levels of sport, girls and women in the United States are taking advantage of sport opportunities and pursuing passions with the ability to strive for and attain professional careers.

³ *Sport participation opportunities should be understood as opportunities only, and not a true measure of the number of female athletes because a female athlete may participate in more than one sport opportunity.*

**Table 2: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey:
Assessing How the Climate for Girls from Marginalized Groups Has Changed in School Sports**

- Reflecting on how the climate has changed for girls from marginalized groups, women sport leaders reported that the climate is improving. The breakdown of women sport leaders who thought the climate for girls from marginalized groups was better or much better than 10 years ago was as follows:
 - For immigrant girls - 41%
 - For girls of color - 62%
 - For girls with disabilities - 49%
 - For LGBTQ girls - 61%
 - For gender non-conforming girls - 35%
- While these figures demonstrate that the climate is getting better in some places, this finding should not be construed to mean that the climate is as inclusive and open to girls of all backgrounds as it needs to be. Many women sport leaders thought the climate for girls from marginalized groups had not changed in 10 years:
 - For immigrant girls - 35%
 - For girls of color - 29%
 - For girls with disabilities - 45%
 - For LGBTQ girls - 30%
 - For gender non-conforming girls - 43%
- There were also women sport leaders who believed the climate for marginalized girls had gotten worse or much worse over the past 10 years:
 - For immigrant girls - 24%
 - For girls of color - 10%
 - For girls with disabilities - 7%
 - For LGBTQ girls - 9%
 - For gender non-conforming girls - 21%

Note: Due to rounding, figures may not add up to 100%.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

“We work with girls in underserved neighborhoods and many have decided very young, that they are not athletes. Early exposure and participation is critical!”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

Grassroots/Youth Sport Participation Opportunities

Children across the United States participate in an array of sport programs offered by organizations with school-based, community-based, church-based, and travel-based affiliations, among others (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Youth sport is considered to be so large currently in the United States, it is not quantifiable (Kelley & Carchia, 2013). No single governing body, agency, or organization monitors youth sport in the U.S., leaving governance up to local, regional, and national offices and organizations to set standards, collect data, and make decisions on youth sport (Kelley & Carchia, 2013). Although difficult to measure due to breadth and rapid growth, according to Sport & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) data shared with The Aspen Institute (2018), 56.5% of children aged

6 to 12 years participated in or played a team sport at least one time during 2014. Girls participate not only in traditional youth sports like AAU basketball or AYSO soccer programs but also in sport programs that combine sports with positive youth development lessons (e.g., Girls on the Run) (Gruno et al., 2018).

- As a general trend, between the ages of 6 to 10, girls' participation in sport lags behind that of boys by 10 percentage points (The Aspen Institute, 2018).
- According to a report from the Aspen Institute (2019), both boys and girls between the ages of 6 to 12 engaged less in regular sport participation in 2018 than they had six years earlier. However, even as the participation rates for boys and girls declined, girls' participation (31.4%) trailed that of boys (38.4%) by 7.3%.⁴
- While girls lag behind boys in sport participation in the early years before puberty, for girls who do participate, they love to play and compete. In a study of 1,129 girls ages 7 to 13 years, 93% of girls who participate in sports like or love to play and three-quarters of girls who love to play plan to play in high school and beyond (Zarrett et al., 2019).
- At its highest rate in six years, 56.5% of children aged 6 to 12 years played a team sport in some form at least one time during 2017. Since 2015, participation rates of children have grown in baseball, basketball, field hockey, flag football, gymnastics, ice hockey, swimming, and wrestling. Since 2016, participation rates have increased in track and field and volleyball while declining in the sport of soccer.⁵ In 2017, 52.3% of girls aged 6 to 12 participated in at least one team sport during the year compared to 61.9% of boys (The Aspen Institute, 2018).
- In the United States, soccer and volleyball have credited grassroots organizational efforts for increases in adolescent girls' sport participation. Fueled by well-established sport club systems, soccer and volleyball have experienced growth in club participation (King, 2017b) due to organizational decisions and policies such as coach accreditations and mandatory background checks of adults working in the sport (USA Volleyball, n.d.).

⁴ The data reported by the Aspen Institute in 2019 came from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) survey in 2018.

⁵ The decline in participation in soccer has been attributed to a change in policy that altered the criteria used for organizing youth level teams from grade level to birth date. This switch disrupted children's preference groups, making the experience less fun for them. According to the Aspen Institute, the sport of soccer is heavily reliant on a pay for play financial structure, which works to exclude children from minority groups and lower socioeconomic backgrounds (The Aspen Institute, 2018).



Citywide Aquatics, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

- In 2018, the NBA established the Jr. NBA Global Championship, a youth basketball tournament for the top 13- and 14-year-old boys' and girls' teams from around the world (Jr. NBA, n.d.). The Jr. NBA Global Championship system promotes teamwork, respect, determination, and community as its core values to promote positive and healthy youth basketball experiences through age-appropriate limits on participation, required rest, trained and licensed coaches, and life skills programming (Jr. NBA, n.d.).
- In the summer of 2019, the WNBA/Jr. NBA partnered with the Women's Sports Foundation, Women's Basketball Coaches Association, USA Basketball, the Girls and Boys Clubs of America, and the YMCA to launch a program called Her Time to Play, "a national grassroots initiative created by the WNBA and NBA to inspire the next generation of U.S. girls, ages 7-14, to play basketball in a positive and healthy way" (WNBA/Jr. NBA Her Time to Play, 2019).
- Girls on the Run, an after-school program for girls from third to fifth grades, encourages physical activity through a positive youth development program grounded in curriculum. This program, along with other positive youth development programs for girls, supports social interactions among teammates and enhanced confidence in abilities with reduced emphasis on appearance (Ullrich-French, Cole, & Montgomery, 2016). Girls on the Run has served more than 1.6 million girls since 1996.
- Certain sports have exponentially increased sport participation opportunities for girls in the United States in the past decade. According to the US Lacrosse Annual Participation Survey, youth girls'

participation increased from 96,446 in 2008 to 163,823 in 2018, an increase of 69.9% (US Lacrosse, 2017). AAU Volleyball has over 100,000 participants, the most of any girls' team sport offered (American Volleyball Coaches Association, 2015).

- At-risk middle school girls aged 11 to 14 years identified by school personnel as having low self-esteem, living a sedentary lifestyle, and/or were overweight participated in an after-school triathlon program consisting of self-esteem building lessons, nutrition, and health science along with triathlon and group fitness training, which positively influenced goal setting, motivation, and academic achievement (Gatz & Kelly, 2018). Participants in the study learned to self-regulate their learning through after-school sport participation.
- The sports attrition rate for urban and rural girls is two to three times greater than for boys from similar areas (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).
- Girls of color, girls of lower socioeconomic status, and girls in urban and rural areas often enter sports later, participate in lower numbers, and drop out earlier than White girls, suburban girls, and girls from higher socioeconomic status. For example, the drop-out rate for girls of color in urban centers is twice that of suburban White girls, and about half of African American parents (51%) and Hispanic parents (49%) felt that their "community offers more sports programs for boys than for girls." By the age of 14, 24% of girls in urban areas dropped out, while 13% of girls from rural areas and 6% of girls from suburban areas dropped out by this age (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).
- In a comparison between White and African American girls, White girls were found to be three times more likely to be involved in sport through a private organization (21% to 7%). African American girls were more likely to participate in programs offered through schools (65%, compared to 50%) (Graves et al., 2014).
- Nontraditional forms of physical activity have been found to be effective ways for engaging and reaching girls who might not otherwise participate. For example, it has been found that physical activity that draws upon cultural dance forms provides additional avenues for girls of color. One innovative program, danceLogic, integrates computer programming and dance and is designed to engage 13- to 17-year-old African American girls from inner city Philadelphia. This program takes elements from hip hop choreography – numbers, patterns, and creativity – and introduces math and technology through that medium (Duncan, 2019).
- Among children with disabilities, 62% of boys have a high interest in playing sports, compared to 40% of the girls (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

High School Sport Participation Opportunities

“Title IX is being eroded. Schools have too many years to ‘improve’ but not correct.”

– Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), for 29 consecutive years, girls' high school sport participation had been on an upward trajectory, with 3,415,306 girls playing on high school teams in 2017–18. However, in 2018–19 girls' participation declined by 11,573 opportunities (NFHS, 2019). Boys' participation also declined by 30,822. Said another way, girls have 42.9% of all high school sports opportunities while boys have 57.1%. The gap has not significantly narrowed in the past 20 years (Zarrett, Veliz, & Sabo, 2018). Annually, boys receive more than 1.13 million more opportunities than girls. Outdoor track and field, volleyball, basketball, soccer, and softball (fastpitch) are the five most popular girls' sport programs in the U.S., with emerging sports of lacrosse and bowling seeing large increases in participants over the past decade (NFHS, 2019).

- The gap in sports participation in school-based programs declined between 1999 and 2004 but started to expand again between 2004 and 2013. In 2017, the sport participation gap had narrowed to 4% among eighth graders but is the largest at 14% among 12th graders (Meier et al., 2018).
- The variety of choice of school sports offered impacts girls' sport participation. According to a study examining the high school sports choices of girls in New Hampshire and Vermont, girls played on more sports teams if they were offered a wider variety of options from which to choose. A shift away from offering exclusive, competitive sports towards a larger variety of more inclusive, non-traditional sports may attract girls not already participating to new sport opportunities (Drake et al., 2014). A study evaluating high school sport participation in Minnesota reported girls' sport participation in swimming and diving, basketball, and golf are trending down, while track and field, lacrosse, cross country, and soccer are trending up (Kaul, 2018).
- A study evaluating the sport team participation rates of high school girls revealed 53% of U.S. high school girls participated in a team sport in 2015. White, non-Hispanic girls participated at a rate of 60.7%, compared to 47.7% of non-Hispanic Black girls,

40.7% of Hispanic and 35.6% of Asian high school girls. Additionally, girls with normal weight status participated at a rate of 58.1%, compared to 50.0% of overweight and 36.5% of obese high school girls (Simon & Uddin, 2018).

- Because of the vast gaps in resources available in typical heavily minority high schools (less than 10% White enrollment), both girls and boys of color have access to far fewer athletic participation opportunities than students attending typical heavily White high schools (90% White enrollment) (National Women’s Law Center, 2015b). Comparing the gaps in opportunities available to female athletes, 49% of typical heavily minority high schools have large shortfalls in athletic opportunities compared to 16% of typical heavily White high schools.
- Pronounced sport participation attrition among teen athletes across elementary and secondary education occurs in the U.S. and tends to be more noticeable among girls, racial and ethnic minorities, and adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Sabo & Veliz, 2014). The attrition rates for girls between eighth grade and 12th grade in all sports are two to three times higher than those for boys. In basketball, for example, the attrition rates are -64% for girls and -36% for boys. The respective rates in lacrosse are -42% and -13%, and for soccer are -53% and -31% (Sabo & Veliz, 2014).
- Girls’ high school sport participation rates vary by state, with Minnesota (49%), Pennsylvania (47.1%), and Maine (46.6%) leading in percentage rates of female high school students participating in sport. Alabama (35%), Tennessee (36.8%), and South Carolina (37.6%) have the lowest percentage rates of female high school students participating in sport (Cook, 2019). Girls’ sport participation rates vary by sport in specific states; for example, the highest girls’ softball participation rate in the U.S., 12%, is in Oklahoma, home of the NCAA Women’s College Softball World Series (King, 2017a).
- In a study of the state of high school sports (Veliz, Snyder, & Sabo, 2019), girls were offered 13 sports teams compared to eight offered to boys. Despite that development, participation rates were still higher for male athletes (52.3%) compared to female athletes (43.6%) during the 2015–16 academic year.
- Lacrosse has been the fastest-growing high school sport in the United States for the past 20 years, including gains for both boys’ and girls’ high school lacrosse participation opportunities of 80% between 2007–2017 (US Lacrosse, 2017). According to NFHS data (2018), from 2012 to 2018, 663 high schools across the country added girls’ lacrosse programs, an increase of 31.3%.
- Using data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, a federally funded longitudinal study of American students in secondary schools, teens were found to reap the most benefit from sport participation when they played two or more sports. Boys were more likely than girls to play two or more sports (47% v. 29%) Among this population, 39% of girls and 25% of boys were not involved in playing any sport (Zarrett, Veliz, & Sabo, 2018).
- In a study by the Human Rights Campaign (2017), while 68% of high school students participated in sport, LGBTQ girls participated at a rate of 29%. The rate was 12% for transgender girls.
- In a study conducted by GLSEN, an organization that works to eradicate discrimination against lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer students (LGBTQ) in kindergarten through high school, four-in-10 LGBT students avoided locker rooms because they felt threatened and/or unsafe. These findings reflect similar trends reported in the 2015 National School Climate Survey, where a third of the LGBT students responded that they felt unsafe in school locker rooms (Krane, 2019). Nearly a quarter of LGBT students reported staying away from athletic facilities and fields for the same reason (GLSEN, 2013).
- Four-in-five LGBT youth athletes remain closeted and do not disclose to their coach or coaches (Human Rights Campaign, 2017). Eighty-two percent of transgender and gender expansive youths are not out to their coaches (Human Rights Campaign, 2017).
- While there are no figures available on how many transgender girls choose to participate in school-based sport programs, the Trevor Project reports that 1.8% of high school students are transgender. In the Trevor Project’s first national survey of mental health issues facing LGBTQ students released in 2019, 58% of transgender and non-binary youth reported being discouraged from using bathrooms that matched their gender identity.
- In 2010, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) cited data from two different studies from the early 2000s indicating that 37% of elementary students in grades 1 through 7 with disabilities and 41% of high school students with disabilities participated in some form of sport, but it was unclear if programs were offered through schools or other entities. From a gender perspective, boys with disabilities consistently participated in sport at higher rates than girls with disabilities. The GAO also noted that there were no national data that would allow reliable comparisons between students with and without disabilities.
- According to the NFHS (2019), of the 15,571 high school students who participated in adaptive sport activities during the 2018–19 academic year, 44% were female students (6,960).



Scout Bassett, Track & Field, WSF Travel & Training Fund recipient

“My current institution still lags in several areas of equity, and I think having more of an external accountability (such as a Title IX review every 3 years) would do wonders for us; it is hard to be a lone voice lobbying for change when the culture is so set in stone.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

College Sport Participation Opportunities

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) is the leading intercollegiate athletics sport governing body in the United States. According to the NCAA, its governance supports college athlete “...success on the field, in the

classroom and for life” (NCAA, 2018a, p. 303). However, other intercollegiate governing bodies, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) and National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA), also offer college sport participation opportunities in the U.S. to women in a variety of sports.

- Across all three NCAA Divisions, 74,239 total women participated in 24 collegiate sports during the 1981–82 season. Basketball had the most participants at 9,624, followed closely by outdoor track and field with 9,217 and volleyball with 8,418. During the 2017–18 season, 36 years later, the NCAA saw 216,378 women participate across all three Divisions, up 291% from 1981–82 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Outdoor track and field was the sport in which there was the greatest participation, with 30,018 women participating during the 2017–18 season, followed by indoor track and field with 27,883 and soccer with 27,811. Basketball, although almost doubling in total participants from 1981–82 with 16,614, ranked fifth of 29 NCAA–sponsored sports, likely due to roster size restrictions (NCAA, 2018a).
- Women’s NCAA–sponsored teams have outnumbered men’s teams since the 1996–97 season. Today, the NCAA sponsors 10,586 women’s teams, or 54% of

NCAA teams, across all three Divisions compared to 9,159 men's teams, or 46% of NCAA teams (Schwarb, 2018).

- The types of sport the NCAA has sponsored over time has changed with popularity, growth, and decline in the United States. In the past 30 seasons, from 1988–89 to 2017–18, across all three Divisions, the NCAA has seen 260 women's golf, 257 women's tennis, 255 women's indoor track, 253 women's cross country, and 202 women's outdoor track programs be cut (NCAA, 2018a).
- Over the same time period, however, the NCAA has added sponsorship to 742 women's golf, 699 women's soccer, 604 women's indoor track, 527 women's cross country, 499 women's outdoor track, and 425 women's lacrosse member programs. From its initial sponsorship of the sport in 2011–12 to 2017–18, the NCAA has added 53 women's beach volleyball member programs. Over the same time period, the NCAA has not sponsored a single new women's archery or badminton team across all three Divisions (NCAA, 2018a).
- Approximately 96% of NCAA–member institutions sponsor women's volleyball, falling second to women's basketball, which boasts a 99% sponsorship rate across NCAA–member institutions (American Volleyball Coaches Association, 2015).
- Of the 214,623 women participating on teams at NCAA member institutions across all three divisions in 2017–18, 69% were White, 11% were Black, and 20% were listed in a category referred to as Female Other (Asian–American, Native American, mixed race, etc.) (NCAA, 2019a).
- In 2017–18, NCAA sports with the highest participation rates for Black female athletes were women's basketball (31%), women's bowling (23%), and women's indoor and outdoor track (21%). While there was racial and ethnic diversity among female athletes participating in the sports of ice hockey and skiing, with approximately 20% being women of color who identified as Asian–American, mixed race, Native American, and other, there were no Black female athletes who participated in the sports of ice hockey and skiing (NCAA, 2019a).
- The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) is another national sport governing body that hosts collegiate championships for four-year institutions. In 2017–18, NAIA institutions offered 74,049 athletic participation opportunities, with 63% available to male athletes (N=44,098) and only 37% available to female athletes (N=30,947) (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).
- Of a total 58,265 participation opportunities offered by 463 schools that are members of the National

Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) in 2017–18, female athletes received 38% (N=22,249) and male athletes received 62% (N=36,016) (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

- The NJCAA has increased in size and opportunities offered to women to compete in intercollegiate athletics. The NJCAA sponsored 18,267 female athletes competing on 1,522 teams in 13 sports in 2005–06. During the 2016–17 season, the NJCAA sponsored 22,785 female student–athletes competing on 1,699 teams in 13 sports, an increase of 4,518 female athlete opportunities and 177 new teams in 11 years (National Junior College Athletic Association, n.d.).
- Among the 33 community colleges and two-year institutions that comprise the Northwestern Collegiate Athletic Conference (NWCA), 47% of athletic opportunities (N=1,803) are provided to female athletes compared to 53% offered to male athletes (N=2,509) (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In contrast, the 107 members of the California Community College Athletic Association (CCAAA) offer 36% (N=9,073) of participation opportunities to female athletes and 63% to male athletes (N=15,687).

Elite/Professional Sport Participation Opportunities

Professional sport opportunities for women in the United States have evolved through successes and hardships over the past several decades. For example, the National Women's Football League was formed in 1974 and dissolved in 1985 (Ginstling, 1995). Women's Professional Soccer and the Women's United Soccer Association both preceded the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) and both failed before either reached its fourth season in existence (Pingue, 2018). As major professional sports leagues for women are still in stages of infancy, the success at the onset of women's professional sport leagues in the United States often relies upon the subsidization and financial backing of longer tenured, financially established U.S. and Canadian professional sport leagues.

The future may be brighter for women's participation in the Olympic Games. Following recommendations made

“The conversation is no longer about should we have equal pay or should we be supporting women. It's how do we support women and really move forward.”

— Megan Rapinoe, 2019 Women's World Cup MVP

in 2018, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) published a report called the IOC Gender Equality Review Project. According to the document, its purpose was to create “action- oriented recommendations for change” related to enhancing gender equality within the Olympic movement (IOC, 2018). The report recommended that for team sports there be an equal number of teams per gender. Similarly, in individual events, the report advised that the participation opportunities for women and men should be equal for the event or discipline. The sport theme also included reviewing competition format and technical rules, uniforms, equipment, technical officials, coaches, venues and facilities, schedule, medical care, safeguarding athletes from harassment and abuse, and helping female athletes transition out of sport and into other opportunities (Houghton et al., 2018).

- The Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), the longest-running women’s professional team sport league in the world, celebrated its 22nd consecutive season in existence in 2018 with a focus on efforts to improve community engagement and connection with fans through collaboration and empowerment (Borders, 2018).
- The WNBA holds a place of distinction among all other professional leagues by being the most diverse workplace among other professional leagues. Women of color composed 84.3% of all players in the WNBA in 2018 (Lapchick, 2018).
- The WNBA is an elite league, as rosters are capped at 12 spots available to each of the 12 WNBA teams each season (WNBA, 2019) while the 30 NBA rosters are capped at 15 (NBA, 2019), placing the odds of draft-eligible NCAA athletes being drafted at 0.9 percent, lower than the National Basketball Association (NBA) (1.2%), Major League Soccer (MLS) (1.4%), National Football League (NFL) (1.6%), National Hockey League (NHL) (6.4%) and Major League Baseball (MLB) (9.5%) (Horowitz, 2018).
- National Pro Fastpitch (NPF), an official development partner of Major League Baseball, began as a professional softball league in the U.S. in 2004 (Berri, 2018). NPF consists of six teams playing a 50-game schedule throughout the summer and, as of 2019, is entering its 15th season. In 2016, NPF’s Scrap Yard Dawgs signed star pitcher Monica Abbott to a six-year, \$1 million contract, the first million-dollar contract in the history of NPF (Hays, 2016). In 2017, NPF increased its roster size limit from 23 to 26 (156 players), with 23 active players available to each team per game (Sievers, 2017). The 30 Major League Baseball regular-season rosters are limited to 25 players for a total of 750 players (MLB, 2019).
- The National Women’s Soccer League (NWSL) formed in 2012, comprises nine teams featuring national team players from around the world and is supported by the Canadian Soccer Association and the U.S. Soccer Federation (National Women’s Soccer League, n.d.a). Salaries of allocated players in the NWSL are paid by both the Canadian Soccer Association and the U.S. Soccer Federation (Pingue, 2018). NWSL teams are required to have a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 20 players during the regular season (National Women’s Soccer League, n.d.b), providing professional soccer opportunities in the United States for 162 to 180 women annually.
- The 2019 U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team won its second consecutive Women’s World Cup and its fourth overall. The team dominated the competition, never losing a match and outscoring opponents 26-3 (Dockery, 2019).
- At the direction of FIFA, the governing body for the sport of soccer (futbol) worldwide, the Women’s World Cup will be expanded from 24 to 32 teams by 2023. When the Women’s World Cup started in 1991, there were 12 teams. By 1999, there were 16, and there were 24 by 2015. As the Women’s World Cup has increased the number of teams playing so too has the Men’s World Cup, which will have an expanded field of 48 teams in 2026 (ESPN, 2019).
- The International Federation of Women’s Lacrosse Associations (IFWLA) has sponsored women’s world championships since 1982. The U.S. has dominated international competition, winning the Women’s Senior World Lacrosse Championship in 2017 (US Lacrosse, 2017).
- Although there is not a professional women’s volleyball league in the United States, many U.S. Women’s Volleyball National Team members compete in professional leagues around the globe such as the European Championships Leagues and Japan V League (USA Volleyball, 2019). For the 2018-19 season, reported as of February 1, 2019, 440 international transfer certificates (327 females, 113 males) were processed by USA Volleyball. Female professional volleyball players competed on teams from 38 different countries (Kaufman, 2019).
- By the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, 45% of the participating athletes were women. The number of women’s events and sports in the Olympic Games has increased over time, bringing the total to 136 women’s events, compared to 161 for men. There were nine mixed events. There were 5,059 female athletes, an all-time high, and 6,178 male athletes for a total of 11,237 participants (Houghton et al., 2017).
- The representation of American women in the 2016 Olympic Games was unprecedented with the U.S. delegation of 292 women being the largest in Olympic history. Not only was their presence at the Games impressive, but so too was their performance, accounting for more than half of the nation’s total

medals (61 of 121) and 27 of the 46 gold medals (Houghton et al., 2017).

- Women have far fewer participation opportunities than men in the Paralympic Games. The 2016 Paralympic Games saw a slight improvement in the percentage of female athletes, with 38.6% of the athletes from the 159 National Paralympic Committees being women (1,669 female athletes), an increase from 35.4% of the athletes in London (Houghton et al., 2017).
- Overall, the U.S. Paralympic team's gender participation has improved over the last four Paralympic Games with regard to female participation, with 44.5% in 2016, up from 42.2% in 2012. The U.S. Paralympic team sent 124 women to the Games in Brazil in 2016, an increase of 30 women from 2012 (Houghton et al., 2017).
- By the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, 41% of the participating athletes were women. There were 136 women's events, compared to 161 for men. There were nine mixed events. At the 2018 Games, there were 1,204 female athletes and 1,704 male athletes for a total of 2,908 participants (Houghton, Pieper, & Smith, 2018).
- There were 107 (44%) female and 134 (56%) male athletes in the U.S. delegation at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games (Houghton et al, 2018).
- At the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, 24% of the participating athletes were women. There were 133 female athletes and 431 male athletes for a total of 564 participants. The number of women's events and sports in the Paralympic Winter Games has increased over time, bringing the total to 37 women's events, compared to 39 for men. There were five mixed events (Houghton et al., 2018).
- There were 19 (28%) female and 50 (73%) male athletes in the U.S. delegation at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games (Houghton et al, 2018).
- For the 2020 Olympic Games, the IOC added five new sports: baseball/softball, karate, skateboarding, surfing, and sports climbing, which will add 18 events and 474 athletes. In keeping with recommendations outlined in the IOC's Gender Equality Review Project report, there will be an equal number of women and men in each of those new sports with the exception of baseball/softball. In those sports, 15 players will compete on softball team rosters while 24 players will compete on baseball team rosters (International Olympic Committee, 2016).
- The IOC projects that 49% of the 2020 Olympic Games participants will be female and that six sports will be gender-balanced for the first time — canoe, judo, rowing, sailing, shooting, and weightlifting (IOC, 2019).

- Of the top 500 women's tennis players in the world as ranked by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), 63 are Americans. Two are ranked in the top 10 as of this writing (Women's Tennis Association, July 17, 2019).
- The WTA has more than 2,500 players representing 100 nations. The 2019 WTA competitive season included 55 events and four Grand Slams in 29 countries (WTA, 2019).
- In 2019, the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) Tour included 33 official money events, as well as the biennial Solheim Cup. There were more than 530 LPGA Tour members with approximately 220 who competed actively throughout the season (LPGA, 2019).
- As of July 2019, there were 24 American golfers amongst the top 100 female golfers. Two Americans were in the top 10 (Rolex Rankings, 2019).

B. The Benefits of Sport Participation for Girls & Women

"I just think participation in sport does so much for the well-being of girls — it builds their confidence, helps manage stress/mental health, and prepares them to handle failure, knowing that the next day may be when they win. It is great preparation for a career."

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

As obvious as this sounds, and as fundamental as this concept is, before a woman can compete on a world stage she must first have access to opportunity and reap the benefits that accrue from that opportunity. While Title IX has significantly impacted female sport participation through creation of opportunities, girls and women still face gender equity issues in sport (Lavoie, 2018; Senne, 2016). Before Title IX, for example, approximately 1 in 27 high school girls participated in sport (Stevenson, 2010). Currently, approximately 1 in 2 high school girls participate in sport (McDonald, 2017). The seismic shift in participation rates and sport opportunities for girls and women in the United States has not, as yet, eradicated the pressures of conforming to traditional standards

of femininity. As Paloian (2012) wrote, femininity has historically been associated with characteristics that are the antithesis of athleticism, placing a value on taking up less space rather than owning the world; being soft-spoken rather than loud; being polite rather than aggressive. While girls and women today in 2019 mount challenges to that conventional view of what it means to be feminine, it remains a barrier for girls to reconcile in pursuit of full participation in sport and physical activity.

There are distinct and vast benefits to girls' participation in sport and physical activity at all levels of sport participation from grassroots to professional sport and beyond. However, there is also a nationwide gender gap in involvement in physical activity and sport between girls and boys (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Rates of physical activity decline throughout adolescence while time spent in sedentary states increases for the average American (Casey et al., 2009; Dumith, Gigante, Domingues, & Kohl, 2011). Sport participation at an early age can enhance health, decrease risks of cancer (Lammert et al., 2018) and cardiovascular disease (Barnes, 2013), and promote greater quality of life (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

There are distinct differences in participation in sport based on gender from physical, mental, and opportunity-based perspectives. For example, male and female athletes perform almost evenly in track and field events consisting of running and jumping until the approximate age of 12, when males begin to outperform females (Tønnessen, Svendsen, Olsen, Guttormsen, & Haugen, 2015). Boys may prefer to participate in team-oriented sport whereas girls prefer sport to be more individualized (Toselli & Belcastro, 2017). Regardless of gender, sport participation and physical activity provides developmental and health benefits (Parker-Pope, 2010).

Girls and women reap significant benefits from sport participation that are both immediate and long-term. Girls who do not participate in sport are less content with their lives than female sport participants (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Sport involvement enhances girls' quality of life as female athletes often benefit more from sport participation than male athletes (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Sport is a favorable domain to support the fostering of leadership skills in girls (Voelker, 2016).

Physical Benefits of Sport Participation for Girls and Women

Sport participation is often associated with increased fitness levels, reduced body fat percentage, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease (Silva et al., 2013). After the passage of Title IX, as sport participation opportunities have become more readily available to women, so too have the physical benefits of sport participation both immediately and over time. It is recommended that young people aged 5-17 participate in 60 minutes of moderate to rigorous activity per day (US

Department of Health and Human Services, 2018), and reaching such standards at younger ages pays dividends for women later in life.

- According to a study evaluating obesity trends among U.S. children and adolescents, overweight rates in girls aged 16 to 19 years jumped significantly from 36% in 2013-14 to 48% in 2015-16 (Skinner, Ravanbakht, Skelton, Perrin, & Armstrong, 2018). In a study evaluating the effect of the increase in athletics opportunities and sport participation directly attributed to Title IX, Kaestner and Xu (2010) found women who were affected by Title IX had lower body mass indices and a 7% lower risk of obesity 20 to 25 years after sport participation. Additionally, women affected by Title IX were more physically active throughout life than women not affected by Title IX (Kaestner & Xu, 2010).
- In a longitudinal study examining the effect of non-scholastic sport club participation on physical activity and cardio-respiratory fitness, data were collected from participants annually from ages 8 to 12 years, then again at 16 years of age. Girls belonging to non-scholastic sport clubs were shown to have lower body fat percentages than non-sport club participants over the course of the study (Telford et al., 2016). Additionally, participation in non-scholastic club sport was associated with higher levels of cardio-respiratory fitness.
- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death among U.S. women. Obesity, affecting 27 percent of U.S. women, increases the risk for CVD as well as diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. Increased weight or sustained weight gain in women can increase the risk of coronary heart disease. As few as 11 minutes of participation in moderate physical activity per day for seven days can reduce CVD risk by 14%. It is also likely that physical activity has a more protective effect against CVD in women than men (Barnes, 2013). CVD is most prevalent among Black women 20 years of age and older, as it affects approximately 47% of African Americans (Mosca et al., 2014). Additionally, African American women have the highest rates of death caused by CVD among all ethnic groups (Mosca et al., 2014). Therefore, access to physical activity and sport is particularly vital for African American women. (Staurowsky et al., 2015).
- Sport participation during early adolescence indicates a stronger likelihood of girls being active during late adolescence (Pfeiffer et al., 2006; Smith, Gardner, Aggio, & Hamer, 2015).
- Adolescent sport participation can have lifelong health benefits for girls and women, including reduced risk of breast cancer, the second leading cause of cancer death in women in the United

States after lung cancer (American Cancer Society, 2019). According to Lammert and colleagues (2018), moderate physical activity between the ages of 12 and 17 years was associated with a 38% decreased risk of diagnosis of pre-menopausal breast cancer among BRCA-associated breast cancers. Physical activity decreases risk of breast cancer partly due to its impact on sex hormones and insulin resistance (Wu, Zhang, & Kang, 2013). Reports link participation increases in weekly physical activity to decreases in breast cancer risk, including a 5% decrease in breast cancer risk per two participated hours of moderate to vigorous recreational activity per week (Wu et al., 2013).

- Girls, on average, start specializing in primary sports later than boys. As sport specialization can lead to burnout and overuse injuries, girls may benefit from participating in multiple sports deeper into their sport careers without the additional risk of injury (The Aspen Institute, 2018).
- High school sport participation positively influences health-related behavior in adolescents, including the larger the athlete's commitment to sport, the smaller the likelihood of the athlete smoking regularly (Melnick, Miller, Sabo, Farrell, & Barnes, 2001). Alcohol consumption was found to be negatively related with athlete identity (Zhou, Heim, & Levy, 2016). According to another study, girls who participate in sport clubs were less likely to have had or to have reported experiences with alcohol or tobacco than female non-sport club participants (Ng et al., 2017).
- A study conducted in 2016 leveraged adolescents' interest in gaming to potentially combat pediatric obesity. Overweight and obese adolescent post-menarcheal girls were evaluated through a 12-week exergaming intervention to examine transfer effects on physical activity, screen time, and self-efficacy. Exergaming programs were focused on dance to encourage whole body movement. Participants self-reported an increase in physical activity and fewer hours watching television or videos as well as significantly improved self-efficacy toward physical activity (Staiano, Beyl, Hsia, Katzmarzyk, & Newton, 2016).
- Participation in sport and physical activity produces varied health benefits by socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity (Staurowsky et al., 2015). African American girls may be more accepting of their body image than White girls, exhibiting less concern with being thin (Mabry et al., 2003).

Social Benefits of Sport Participation for Girls and Women

The social benefits of sport participation include increased well-being, life satisfaction, community cohesion and unity, civic renewal, and youth development, and more (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2017). Sport participation, when considered part of the lifestyle of a person, allows for a person to age through their sport, thus eliciting the social benefits of sport throughout life. As sport participation opportunities have increased for women since Title IX, their lifestyles have changed as well. As benefits of sport participation in adolescence signal stronger likelihood of sport participation later in life (Kaestner & Xu, 2010), the social benefits and learned behaviors through sport by young girls will likely have lifelong effects.

A societal shift has altered perceptions around female participation in sport, female athleticism, and perceptions of the female athlete in the United States. However, barriers to participation still exist for women in sport (Staurowsky et al., 2015). Social support from peer groups, families, and coaches can assist girls' navigation through barriers to increase potential for enjoying the lifetime effects of sport and physical activity participation.

- While boys identified "becoming muscular" as their main outcome of sport participation, girls identified "making new friends," according to a study in England (Cope, Bailey, Parnell, & Kirk, 2018). A study by Soares, Antunnes, and van den Tillaar (2013) produced similar results, indicating girls prefer friendship, fitness, and sociability as motivators to participate in sport.
- Social benefits of physical education and school sport require the development of adolescents' abilities to interact positively with others, which, in turn, results in gains for themselves, their schools, and their communities (Bailey et al., 2006). Casey and colleagues (2009) conducted a study examining sociological motives of rural adolescent girls' participation in sport. Results showed adolescent girls to be positively influenced by fun physical activity involving friends with the support of their families. Adolescent girls are vulnerable to declining levels of physical activity due to intrapersonal (i.e., body image and self-esteem) and interpersonal (i.e., peer groups, family support) changes, and therefore, participation in sport is particularly important for this age group.
- The replacement of hard spaces (asphalt) in physical activity spaces with green spaces (grass) in a Los Angeles elementary school resulted in an increase in participation for boys and girls, with girls continuing to participate in more vigorous activities for a longer period after the greening project was completed (Raney, Hendry, & Yee, 2019).

- In a national study of 814 parents, it was found that they tended to place a somewhat higher value on sport for their sons than their daughters. Gender-role beliefs held by parents played a small but significant part in the way parents viewed their daughters' participation in sport and the types of sports their daughters played (Heinze et al., 2017).
- Chen, Snyder, and Magner (2010) examined the impact of athletics participation on college students' social life and identity. The Division I athletes in the study positively associated their role as athletes with creativity, self-esteem, confidence, cultural acceptance, and overall development, among other constructs. The core benefits of athletics participation simultaneously enhanced social relationships for the athletes.
- Pedersen and Siedman (2004) found adolescent team sport achievement and mastery in team sport to relate to girls' global self-esteem during middle adolescence. Team sport self-evaluation was found to be a mediator between achievement and self-esteem (Pedersen & Siedman, 2004). Achievement and self-esteem were found to be partially mediated by girls' perceptions of competence and interest in team sport (Pedersen & Siedman, 2004). Interestingly, Pedersen and Siedman (2004) did not find adolescent individual sport achievement to relate to girls' global self-esteem, suggesting girls benefit significantly from the esteem-enhancing qualities of team sport.
- Duncan, Strycker, and Chaumeton (2015) examined personal, family, and peer variables on associations with physical activity and sports participation of African American, Latina, and White girls. For all three groups, friends' support was significantly related to participation in moderate to vigorous physical activity participation. Greater parental support was related to more organized sport participation across all ethnic and racial groups. Friends' support related only to African American girls' participation in organized sport (Duncan et al., 2015).
- Daniels and Leaper (2006) examined the longitudinal interrelations between adolescent girls and boys aged 12–21 years and sport participation, overall self-esteem, and perceived peer acceptance. Findings from the study indicated peer acceptance mediated sport participation and self-esteem. Physically active adolescent girls who perceived being accepted by their peers experienced increased feelings of global self-esteem (Daniels & Leaper, 2006).
- Building supportive relationships within sport is a critical ingredient for engaging and retaining girls in sport. Key relationships include those between the coach and player; those among the players through friendship and team cohesion; and those between other influential individuals who are involved in the athletes' daily lives, including parents, friends, and others in their schools and communities (Zarrett et al., 2019).
- Girl-centered programs, like Girls on the Run, have been found to increase self-esteem among adolescent girls in grades 3 through 8, empowering them to take on life's challenges during and after their experience in the program (Iachini et al., 2017; Weiss et al., 2016).
- Programs such as Girls on the Move have been designed as interventions to promote physical activity among girls. In a study comparing girls who participated in the program with girls who did not, two important mediators that were found to engage young adolescent girls in physical activity was their own enjoyment and social support (Robbins et al., 2019).

Emotional Benefits of Sport Participation for Girls and Women

For girls and women, there are myriad emotional benefits to participating in sport, including elevated levels of confidence, happiness, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and general well-being (Rodriguez-Ayllon et al., 2019). Emotional intelligence is the ability and awareness to accurately perceive emotions in oneself and in others, the ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking, the ability to understand emotions, and the ability to manage emotions (Mayer, 2004). Emotional intelligence developed during youth is crucial to overall emotional development (Amado-Alonso, León-del-Barco, Mendo-Lázaro, Sánchez-Miguel, & Iglesias-Gallego, 2018). As girls are aided in their emotional development through participation in sport, they are less likely to experience symptoms of depression, stress, and overall distress (Rodriguez-Ayllon et al., 2019).

- Donaldson and Ronan (2006) evaluated the relationship between sport participation and emotional well-being in children through self-reported emotional and behavioral issues and self-concept. The results of the study indicated increased levels of sport participation positively related to emotional and behavioral well-being and self-concepts. Children with high perceptions of their own sport-related competencies reported fewer emotional and behavioral issues than children who actually possessed such competencies. Additionally, the study found sport participation to be positively associated with self-concept (Donaldson & Ronan, 2006).
- Researchers in Canada examined the longitudinal association between years participating in team and individual sport during adolescence and depression in early adulthood. According to the study, high school team sport participants reported lower depression scores as young adults, and the number

of years participating in team sport negatively correlated with depression scores. Due to the social nature of team sport, participants experience positive social outcomes not experienced in individual sport participation (Sabiston et al., 2016).

- Adolescent self-esteem is enhanced through participation in sport (Fox, 2000), and according to Brettschneider (2001), girls discover positive self-esteem benefits from participation in sport club activities earlier than boys.
- Amado-Alonso and colleagues (2018) conducted a study in Spain to evaluate the relationship between emotional intelligence and sport participation in 6- to 12-year-old boys and girls. Results indicated children who participated in organized sport had more emotional intelligence, better emotional abilities at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels, and better adaptability skills. Additionally, girls in the study demonstrated greater emotional intelligence than boys, suggesting girls and women are more emotionally competent and recognize emotions better interpersonally (Amado-Alonso et al., 2018).
- Physical activity is negatively associated with adolescent depression, stress, negative affect, and total psychological distress and positively associated with self-image, life satisfaction, happiness, and psychological well-being (Rodriguez-Ayllon et al., 2019). Frequency of physical activity has been shown to be positively correlated with well-being and negatively correlated with anxiety and depression, indicating more frequent physical activity contributes to mental health (McMahon et al., 2017).
- According to a study, reported quality of life, or personal contentment, was significantly lower in girls who did not participate in team sport when compared to girls involved in team sport (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Students reporting higher quality of life scores were more physically and socially active, indicating an association between athletics participation and quality of life.

Academic Benefits of Sport Participation for Girls and Women

Students who compete and participate in school-sponsored activities have better academic and educational outcomes, including grades, test scores, and educational expectations (NFHS, n.d.; Zarrett et al, 2019; Veliz, 2019; Veliz, Snyder, & Sabo, 2019). As sport participation opportunities for girls at the primary, secondary, and collegiate levels increased dramatically after the passage of Title IX, female students have increasingly been more able to take advantage of the academic benefits of sport participation. Although sport participation is directly related to higher grade point averages and test scores, other factors improving girls'

academic self-esteem and student identification are affiliated with participation in sport.

- According to a study examining the associations between sport team participation, physical activity, and academic outcomes in middle and high school girls, both moderate to vigorous physical activity and sport team participation were associated with higher grade point averages in high school-age girls. Additionally, there was a significant linear relationship between an increase in hours of moderate to vigorous physical activity and grade point average. Sport team participation likely increases student identification through improved academic outcomes (Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, & Wall, 2009).
- In a study of 184 African American high school girls enrolled in a large urban public high school, those who participated in vigorous physical activity were found to have better academic performance (Shen, 2017).
- In an analysis of data from the Education Longitudinal Study from 2002, using a representative sample of 16,200 students, Bang et al. (2018) reported that high school sports participation had a positive effect on the grade point averages of Asian, Black, and Hispanic students.
- Higher sports participation rates for girls and boys across U.S. high schools have been found to be associated with higher Advanced Placement (AP) math, AP science, AP foreign language, and overall AP enrollment rates (Veliz & Shakib, 2014).
- The positive effect of sports on academics appears to be similar, if not stronger, in girls than in boys (Pearson, Crissey, & Riegle-Crumb, 2009; Veliz & Shakib, 2014). Positive effects may vary depending on sport, however, and may also be mediated by racial and ethnic group (Sabo, Veliz, & Rafalson, 2013).
- Shifrer, Pearson, Muller, and Wilkinson (2015) conducted a longitudinal study to evaluate the relationship between high school sport participation and college attendance in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Results indicated high school sport participation was positively associated with college attendance for White boys and girls, Black boys, and Latino boys and girls. Concerning results indicated high school sport participation was negatively associated with college attendance for Black girls. The researchers indicated the relatively disadvantaged backgrounds of Black female athletes, both socially and academically, likely contributed to the results, indicating Black girls may have a stronger perception of athletics as a discretionary activity not benefitting academic or postsecondary pursuits.

- Troutman and Dufur (2007) evaluated data from the National Education Longitudinal Study and found women who previously engaged in interscholastic high school sport were more likely to complete college than former high school female non-athletes, indicating a positive relationship between sport participation and academic achievement.
- Participation in high school varsity sports is positively associated with academic achievement, and while benefits appear to benefit males more than females in mathematics, high school athletics participation benefits females more than males in science and vocabulary (Yeung, 2015).
- High school athletes are less likely to miss school, as a study conducted in Minnesota found high school athletes miss an average of 7.4 days of school per year, less than the non-athlete average of 8.8 missed days (Born, 2007; NFHS, n.d.). Another study supported such findings, indicating North Carolina high school students miss an average of 6.3 days of school per 180-day school year, much less than the non-athlete average of 11.9 missed days (NFHS, n.d.; Overton, n.d.). This additional time spent in school likely contributes to increases in academic performance and grade point average of high school female college athletes.
- Female high school athletes in Kansas reported higher grade point averages than non-athletes, including 12% more female athletes than non-athletes reporting a GPA of 3.0 or above and 18% more female athletes than non-athletes reporting a GPA of 3.5 or above (Lumpkin & Favor, 2012).
- Female athletes graduated at a rate 8% higher than female non-athletes. When compared to males, 87% of female athletes reported a GPA at or above 3.0, whereas 74% of male athletes reported a GPA at or above 3.0. Female non-athletes were 24 times more likely to drop out of high school than female athletes; male non-athletes were 12 times more likely than male athletes to drop out of high school. These findings suggest that sport participation may be more vital to the educational experience of female high school student retention (Lumpkin & Favor, 2012).
- Based on federal graduation rates (FGR) for select groups in 2018 as reported by the NCAA, female athletes graduated at higher rates than other students in the undergraduate population. Compared with an overall student FGR of 66%, White female athletes had a 78% graduation rate; Black female athletes had a 70% graduation rate; and Hispanic/Latino female athletes had a 69% graduation rate (NCAA, 2018b).
- Comparisons between the federal graduation rates (FGR) for female athletes and other female students within racial groups revealed that female athletes

graduated at higher rates than their female student counterparts. While White female athletes outpaced White female undergraduates by 6% (78% to 72%), Black female athletes graduated at rates that were 19% higher than Black female students (70% to 51%), and Hispanic/Latino female athletes graduated at a rate that was 5% higher than Hispanic/Latino female students (69% to 64%) (NCAA, 2018b).

C. Barriers to Sport Participation for Girls and Women in the U.S.

“With club sports, we are falling into a pay to play culture, which is predominantly white, high income female student athletes. We must find ways to include those that are low-income — for all sports.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

Girls’ participation in sport is shaped by access and opportunity (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). Somerset and Hoare (2018) identified cost, location, and time as key barriers to adolescent sport participation. O’Reilly and colleagues (2018) identified competing priorities, lack of positive role models, lack of media exposure and attendance, and insufficient funding as barriers to sport participation for girls and women. Many of these barriers intersect with one another. In a study of U.S. adults (YouGov, 2017), 60% of adults agreed that girls do not have as many opportunities to get involved and only 43% believe they know what steps they could take to help girls become more active in sports.⁶

Cost of Participation & Financial Resource Concerns

Access to sport participation is connected in no small measure to financial resources. As U.S. public school systems responded to limited resources and budget strains, as well as pressures associated with children meeting certain testing criteria established through the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, spending on extracurricular activities such as sport programs was redirected to other areas of schools. The funding model to emerge out of that resetting of priorities was a pay-for-play system

⁶ This was a nationally representative sample of 1,372 U.S. adults aged 18 years or older. Six percent of the sample were parents with daughters.



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that applied athletic and/or activities fees to families who wanted their children to play after-school sports. According to Eyler et al. (2019), California is the only state to ban such a model for funding school sport programs, while 17 states allow such fees with varying requirements relative to waivers for those who cannot afford them.

Beyond costs associated with school sports, access to sport opportunities for girls and women in the United States is greatly affected by the expense associated with participation, from equipment costs to instruction costs to ongoing membership fees. For youth sport participants, community-based programs and travel teams add an additional dimension to the financial burden families may bear in supporting girls in their sport preferences.

- A survey of U.S. adults (YouGov, 2017) found that a large majority (73%) said that high schools and colleges provide better support for boys' and men's sports programs relative to girls' and women's.
- A RAND Corporation study (Whitaker et al., 2019), found that 63% of school budgets are stagnant or decreasing, 58% of community-based sports fees are rising, and 42% of low-income families whose kids do not play sports cite cost as the main reason.
- The disparate rates at which African American and White girls participate in physical activity have been attributed to African American girls being more likely to attend schools with few resources and higher poverty rates. This impacts material resources (gymnasiums and fields), human resources (coaches), programs, and opportunities to play. In a nationwide survey, 33% of African American parents reported that their daughters never participated in sport or had to stop playing because the family could not financially support their participation. That compares

with 18% of parents of White girls (Graves, Kaufmann, & Frolich, 2014).

- Girls from lower-income households were less likely to participate in a wider range of sports (two or more within the last year) than girls of higher-income households (Zarrett, et al, 2019).
- There is a minority-majority gap in sport participation due to cost, as minority groups often have fewer socioeconomic resources than majority groups (Strandbu, Bakken, & Sletten, 2019). In a study of African American women in a rural community in Texas, a barrier to staying fit and healthy was the financial barrier to obtaining healthy food choices (Walker & Cunningham, 2014).
- Gender differences in sport participation are less significant in communities with higher median incomes (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Swanson, 2016), indicating income levels are positively associated with girls' sport participation. Through interviews with African American girls from a low-income community, Wright et al. (2017) found that financial barriers to sport participation were lessened when African American girls had access to scholarships to off-set expenses. As a matter of dimension, however, only 1% of high school athletes of any race receive scholarship support (Brenner, 2019).
- Elite club volleyball athletes are required to spend approximately \$7,000 annually on tournaments, gear, travel, and equipment. Such a pay-to-play system often diminishes opportunities for non-club sport participants to compete even at less competitive high school levels (Friedman, 2017).
- Chronic stress associated with providing for their families, the demands of fulfilling their roles as single mothers, and the lack of social and community support systems were identified by a group of 32 Black single mothers as reasons why it was difficult for them to participate in physical activity. Lack of child care, cost, and fatigue were identified as major factors that prevented or discouraged regular physical activity by Black single mothers (Dlugonski et al., 2017).

Location & Safety

The levels of safety and security within neighborhoods and communities have been found to have an impact on girls' access to and opportunity to participate in sport and physical activity.

- Using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), Chaparro et al. (2019) found that girls between the ages of 12 through 20 years participated less and were at greater risk of obesity in neighborhoods with higher crime rates. Girls who lived in high-crime areas had 26%

lower odds of engaging in moderate to vigorous physical activity during the week compared to girls in low-crime neighborhoods. Girls in high-crime neighborhoods had 27% higher odds of being overweight/obese when compared to girls in lower-crime neighborhoods.

- There is a positive association between the level of walkability in a neighborhood, body mass index, and physical activity. Where there is greater walkability, girls in suburban areas reap the benefits of lower BMI and greater engagement in physical activity (Jia et al., 2019).
- Parent-perceived neighborhood safety and parent encouragement of physical activity are believed to be potential predictors of physical activity for children. Examining perceptions of physical activity on the part of parents and children, parents reported that their children participated outside in at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day while children reported that they participated in 30 minutes of physical activity three times a week. Parents reported higher levels of physical activity among boys rather than girls (although girls did not report lower rates of physical activity). Citing previous studies, researchers noted that ensuring the safety of neighborhoods was important to child engagement in physical activity, especially among girls (Nicksic et al., 2018).
- In a study of 41,293 school-aged children in Shelby County, Tennessee, neighborhood environmental issues affect overweight/obesity status and physical activity levels. In general, girls are more sensitive than boys to neighborhood environments in terms of their sense of being able to get up and go places (Yang et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2018).
- Healthy behaviors, including physical activity levels and healthy eating, are linked with “built, social, and socioeconomic environments assets (access to parks, social ties, affluence)” (Carroll-Scott et al., 2013).

Quality of Coach Expertise

- Research shows coach actions impact the personal and social development of athletes (Schailée, Theeboom, & Van Cauwenberg, 2017). However, lack of qualified and educated coaches for youth sport may have a negative effect on participation and commitment. A study in Australia evaluating the efficacy of coach education on the intensity of girls aged 9 to 12 years found that girls with coaches who had gone through coach education programs engaged in more practice time in all categories of physical activity (moderate to vigorous) than girls with non-educated coaches (Guagliano, Lonsdale, Kolt, Rosenkranz, & George, 2015).

“Don’t make girls feel as though they have to choose between sports or other commitments to be the best. Don’t make girls feel inferior if they don’t make the best team (varsity/elite level), boys are encouraged to work harder to make varsity or elite teams. Girls are encouraged to quit because the coach must not like them or value them.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

- Another study evaluating the coach-to-peer motivational climates and developmental gains of disadvantaged girls through participation in sport found the more coaches created a mastery-oriented climate, the more likely the athletes reported positive developmental gains (Schailée et al., 2017).
- Coaches play a particularly central role in engaging and retaining girls in sport. Among girls ages 7-13 years, research shows that coaches who combine fun with healthy competition, integrate goal setting and help build supportive relationships have a strong positive influence on girls’ liking/loving their sport and their intention to play in the future. (Zarrett et al., 2019).

Time Constraints & Demands

Time constraints of school, work, relationships, and careers can negatively impact sport participation opportunities and lead girls to drop out of sport sooner and at a higher rate than boys (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). An Australian study examined longitudinal barriers affecting girls’ participation in physical activity and sport and found intrapersonal barriers to increase as females matured, and despite the fact that female participants placed consistently high importance on physical activity and sport, the importance of school, work, relationships, and careers increased (Eime et al., 2014).

- Girls enter sport at an average age of 7.4 years, a later age than boys who enter at an average of 6.8 years (Sabo & Veliz, 2008). White girls are most likely to be involved with sports at age 6 or younger (53%) while the early entry rate for African American

girls is 29% and 32% for Hispanic girls (Staurowsky et al., 2015).

- Even for female athletes who have made a career out of finding time to manage athletics, academics, and other life commitments, they are finding it harder to create a balance. Based on self-report, college athletes spent more time on their sports in 2015 than they did five years before.⁷ For female college athletes, their time expenditure had gone up by at least two hours in every sport across Divisions I and II (average hours reported were between 31 and 32 hours per week), with the exception of women's basketball (35 hours per week). In Division III, time commitment for female athletes went up in women's basketball (29 hours per week) and remained the same in other sports (27 hours per week). The time commitment for female athletes was, however, lower than that for male athletes across all three divisions (NCAA, 2016).
- In interviews with 23 elite athletes with disabilities (17 males; 6 females), cost, lack of opportunity, and time constraints were barriers that needed to be overcome in order for these athletes to fully develop (McLoughlin et al., 2017).

Sport Specialization

Many believe the most effective way to reach elite status in sport is to participate and specialize in one sport from a young age and eliminate others (Myer et al., 2015). On the contrary, sport specialization can reduce opportunities for all children to participate in sport and can lead to reduced motor skills and reduced development of lifetime sports skills (Myer et al., 2015). Girls should be encouraged to “sample” various sport settings, as research links the sampling approach to continued participation in physical activity into adulthood (Cote, Horton, MacDonald, & Wilkes, 2009).

- For example, USA Basketball, in conjunction with the NBA, released its Youth Basketball Guidelines to prioritize health and well-being and enhance the experience and development of young athletes. It is recommended in the report that athletes aged 12–14 years participate in a maximum of seven months of organized basketball per year (National Basketball Association, n.d.).
- Teens who participate in two or more sports engage in healthier behaviors than those who participate in one or none. Boys (47%) are more likely than girls (29%) to participate in two or more sports (Zarrett, Veliz, & Sabo, 2018).
- In a study of 1,544 high school athletes (780 girls, 764 boys) from 29 schools, Post et al. (2017) found

that girls were more likely than boys to participate in high-volume competition (23% v. 11%); participate on a club team (61% vs. 37%) and to have a more highly specialized sport experience (16% to 10%). This pattern of participation was found to expose girls to a greater likelihood of lower extremity injury (LEI). Similarly, Jayanthi and Dugas (2017) found that the more single-sport specialization female athletes engaged in, the higher the risk of overuse injury and burnout. Girls generally overspecialize in sport later than boys (The Aspen Institute, 2018). Depending on the sample, as we see here, girls may be more involved in highly specialized sport experiences than boys.

Technology

As American children have become more involved in and influenced by technology, concerns have risen regarding how much time children are spending looking at and engaging with electronic devices on a daily basis and the negative impact this has on their health. Smartphone use has been found to impair parents' ability to fully connect with their children (Kushlev & Dunn, 2019). In February of 2019, the Eunice Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development was petitioned by the Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development to include the effects of screen media habits on children's health as a research priority for the next five years (Children and Screens, 2019). According to the Pew Research Center, amidst growing concerns from parents about the attachment their children have to their electronic devices, teens between the ages of 13 and 17 years are reporting similar concerns. In a national survey of 743 teens and 1,058 parents, nine in 10 teens expressed a belief that spending too much time online was a problem for teens. Girls were more likely to report that they spent too much time on social media (47% girls vs. 35% boys) while boys said they spent too much time playing video games (41% boys vs. 11% girls) (Jiang, 2018).

Sedentary behavior, such as screen time (including video gaming and TV), can coexist with a physically active lifestyle (Ferrar, Olds, & Maher, 2013); however, adolescent screen time can serve as a barrier to sport participation. Small screen time and physical activity showed an inverse relationship in Norwegian 9- and 15-year-old children (Dalene et al., 2018). “Social-screenie” girls, according to Ferrar and colleagues (2013), place a high value upon television and computer use and social interaction and report poor dietary habits and higher weight status, placing them at higher health risk.

- Five girls from a local Girl Scout Troop (ages 7–11) (three African American, one African American and Dominican, and one White) were interviewed about the reasons why they did not participate in outdoor physical activity. In addition to having very busy schedules due in part to participating in a variety of hobbies, the other factors they identified linked in

⁷ The NCAA GOALS study collects data from college athletes in cycles. The data collection years compared here are for 2010 and 2015. Data from the 2015 study was published in 2016.

some way to technology. They noted, for example, that the people around them are indoors on their electronic devices so that influenced their decisions to do the same. They talked about the draw of being on social media and attractiveness of having access to electronic devices so that they could play computer games (Sackett, Newhart, Jenkins & Cory, 2018).

Gender Norms & Stereotypes

“I watch the marketing from my own kids schools and there is a ton of support for ‘gender appropriate’ activities—dance for girls and football for boys but no support for things like soccer, which is played equally.... When girls see support from schools for gendered activities it carries deep into their lives.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

The sport environment in the U.S. has been structured historically to conform to a gender binary, thus the arrangement of separate teams for girls and boys, and for women and men (Staurowsky et al., 2016). Interwoven into that binary has been a difficult to eradicate set of beliefs about male superiority and female inferiority that cast female athletes as the weaker sex and less capable of and less interested in participating in an array of sporting activities. Distilled into expectations about how girls and women should behave within the narrow confines of gender norms, how girls and women present themselves to the world, how they play the sports they play, and what sports they choose to participate in is the subject of societal scrutiny, inspection, and judgement. Living in the world, and in an effort to live their fullest existences, girls and women often bump up against those expectations that can, at times, constrain and/or deny who they are. And while overt sex stereotyping — appearance over accomplishment, frailty over strength, politeness over aggressiveness — has given ground to a much more nuanced understanding of who girls and women are, those attitudes have not lost sway in influencing the experiences of female athletes and women working in the sport industry.

Further, in confronting the reality that gender is a social construction that is not locked into polar opposites of female and male but is a hub around which intersecting components about identity occur (Rauscher & Cooky, 2019), Fisher et al. (2018) explain that those teaching, instructing, counseling, and advising athletes need to understand how sex assignment at birth (assigned as female or male); gender identity (e.g., female, male, transgender, queer, or other); gender expression (e.g., “feminine,” “masculine,” and “androgynous”) and sexual orientation (e.g., asexual, bisexual, heterosexual, and homosexual) impact performance and interpretations of the body.

- The complications of gender norms become apparent in the case of women competing in the sport of mixed martial arts (MMA). In a study examining how people responded to MMA female fighters in three different types of ads (sexualized, neutral, or combat), female respondents preferred neutral representations of the fighters significantly more than male respondents. Both female and male respondents viewed MMA female fighters in sexualized ads as more attractive and charming but also less talented, less successful, and less tough (Greenwell et al., 2017).
- The pressure for children to remain in their gender lanes is reflected in some research that shows the vulnerabilities of athletes who opt to participate in sports not historically marked for their gender. For example, in an analysis of data from Add Health (6,485 adolescents), participating in team sport was generally associated with lower suicidal ideation, but athletes who chose individual sports outside of gender norms (cheerleading for boys; wrestling for girls) were at higher risk for suicidal ideation (Gunn & Lester, 2014).
- In a survey of girls and their parents (Zarrett et al., 2019), nearly one-third (32%) of the girls reported that sometimes boys made fun of them or made them feel uncomfortable while they practiced. Nearly one-third of girls (31%) expressed that appearance-related reasons were part of their motivation for their participation.
- Through focus group interviews with 78 Latina students between the ages of 12 and 17 years, gender-based teasing primarily from male peers but occasionally from female peers was identified as a barrier to their participation in sport and physical activity (Lopez, 2019).
- Among parents responding to a national survey regarding Title IX and support and attitudes towards girls participating in sport, parents had higher expectations for their sons than their daughters. The breakdown of parental expectations for sport participation was as follows: high school intramural sport participation (sons – 26%; daughters – 14%);

high school varsity sports participation (sons – 44%; daughters – 36%); college club or intramural sports (sons – 19%; daughters – 14%); and NCAA varsity sports (sons – 17%; daughters – 12%) (YouGov America, Inc., 2017).

Culture & Multiple Identities

In order to gain a full appreciation of the gender gaps that exist for girls and women in the U.S. sport system, it is important to consider those gaps within the larger context of other aspects of the human condition that contribute to the ways in which girls and women live in the world, the way they view themselves and the way others view them. In effect, not all female experience is the same, shaped as it is by cultural, ethnic, gender, political, national, racial, and religious identities as well as socio-economic status and sexual orientation, as examples (Krane, Barber, & Durah, 2018; Staurowsky, 2016). As a consequence, policy designed to encourage greater access to sport among U.S. girls and women needs to take the complexity of girls' and women's lives into account.

- Latina girls cited gender-related teasing and self-consciousness as cause for discomfort in participating in sport; however, they subsequently pushed back against stereotypes of Latina women being subservient, passive, and disinterested in sport and reported positive benefits related to their participation (Lopez, 2019).
- Girls in immigrant families report lower rates of sport participation than boys in similar families as

many immigrant parents hold traditional attitudes towards gender roles (Sabo & Veliz, 2008; Thul, LaVoi, Hazelwood, & Hussein, 2016; Thul, LaVoi, & Wasend, 2018). Female children of immigrant parents may be less likely to participate in sport, as immigrant parents tend to have negative attitudes towards their daughters' sport participation (Strandbu et al., 2019). Participation variations between girls and boys are likely driven by economic disparities, racial and ethnic differences, and family characteristics (Sabo & Veliz, 2008).

- As reported in *Play to Win: Improving the Lives of LGBTQ Youth in Sports* (Human Rights Campaign, 2017), anti-LGBTQ attitudes are pervasive in the sport culture. According to a survey conducted by Dennison & Kitchen (2015), 84% of Americans indicate that they either witnessed or experienced anti-LGBTQ attitudes in sport.
- In an analysis of physical activity disparities between heterosexual and sexual minority youth between the ages of 12 and 22 years using data from the U.S. Growing Up Today study, Calzo et al. (2014) found that sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, mostly heterosexual) were 46%–76% less likely to participate in team sports than their same-sex heterosexual peers. Intolerance to gender non-conformity was identified as a key barrier to participation.
- Interviews with 12 African American female runners who participated in marathons and half-marathons revealed that they navigated concerns about hair, physical appearance, body shape, and cultural

**Table 3: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey:
Access & Opportunities: Factors Impacting Participation in Sport**

Financial and Operational

- Leaders generally noted that lack of access to opportunities had the greatest negative impact on girls' participation in sport over the last 10 years.
- The greatest concern regarding girls' participation in sport was the ability of their parents to afford participation fees and access to transportation to take them to and from practices/games.
- Youth leaders felt that access to quality facilities/resources and equal treatment was more of a barrier to participation than did leaders from other areas of sport.

Social and Behavioral

- Leaders generally noted that sedentary behaviors (e.g., increased screen time) had the greatest negative impact on girls' participation in sport over the last 10 years.
- Other factors identified as having a negative impact on participation included competing demands for time because of academics or other extracurricular activities.
- Girls' knowledge of how to get involved was viewed as having one of the greatest positive impacts on girls' participation in sport.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

expectations (Rice et al., 2018). These runners also spoke to the isolation they felt in participating in a predominantly White sport, feeling at times like “they were an attraction on display.”

- Findings from Rice et al. (2018) regarding the concern African American female athletes have about hair and appearance as barriers to participation is further substantiated by Woolford et al. (2016) and Wright et al. (2017).
- The issue of racial identity and the isolation African American female athletes participating on predominantly White teams is anticipated and shared by African American mothers. In a qualitative study of African American mothers, they too expressed concern about the attention that would be drawn to their daughters on White teams and their own discomfort being a minority parent (Perkins & Partridge, 2014).
- Focusing on increasing the rate of participation of African American girls in physical activity, Barr, Anderson, and Kramer (2018) found that effective programs were structured around family involvement. Effective programs also included “Culturally tailored strategies ranged from surface-level (i.e., African American fitness instructors and intervention materials highlighting same-race models) to structural-level adaptations (i.e., family-oriented components, inclusion of Gospel aerobics and dance as a mode of physical activity, and adherence to cultural food preferences) (p. 139).
- Research on Muslim girls demonstrates that gender and religion intersect with family and community expectations in ways that enable involvement in physical education, recreation, and sport but also present challenges (Stride & Flintoff, 2017). Contrary to prevailing perceptions, Muslim girls serve as active agents in navigating physical activity spaces.

Other Barriers to Girls & Women’s Sport Participation

- Adolescent obesity is a barrier to sport participation, as obesity rates jumped significantly from 36% in 2013–14 to 48% in 2015–16 in girls aged 16 to 19 years (The Aspen Institute, 2018).
- As adolescent girls’ bodies change, so too do their experiences in sport. A study in the United Kingdom found 73% of adolescent girls aged 11–18 years reported breast-specific concerns with their sport careers, indicating the onset of puberty as a barrier to physical activity (Scurr et al., 2016).
- Body composition can explain delayed menarche and menstrual irregularities and girls who mature later often select or are placed in sports that favor small, lean body types (Sims, 2018).

D. Health & Safety Concerns

While there is no question that participation in sport presents a multitude of benefits for girls and women that can last a lifetime, participation in any kind of activity can pose health and safety concerns. As a result, it is critical to be aware of vulnerabilities in the sport system that pose potential threats to female athletes and to be responsive to the needs of female athletes. In this section, we provide a broad overview of some of the most pressing concerns that female athletes face from a health and safety perspective.

“Nowadays sports are a little too serious.... I just try to have as much fun as possible.”

**– Little League World Series Star
Mo’ne Davis**

Coach Emotional & Verbal Abuse

The coach-athlete relationship is innately one where there is a power imbalance, however there has been a dearth of research on this topic (Kavanaugh, Brown, & Jones, 2017). The work that has been done centers around exploitative and abusive behaviors targeting both female and male athletes by coaches that typically manifest in one of four forms: emotional abuse, neglect and bullying, physical abuse, and sexual abuse (Kavanaugh et al., 2017). This section deals primarily with coach emotional and verbal abuse as well as neglect and bullying. Coaches often hold all of the power due to their ability to make choices about playing time, scholarships, team selection, and their ability to regulate access to training, facilities, and support staff (Brake, 2012; Bringer, Brackenridge, & Johnston, 2002). Because of the power imbalance and authoritarian nature of sport, scholars argue athletics is a prime climate for the abuse of athletes (Cense & Brackenridge, 2001; Kerr & Stirling, 2012; Stirling & Kerr, 2013).

As Jacobs, Smits, and Knoppers (2017) also explain, coaches draw upon several rationales to justify treating elite youth athletes in ways that are objectively abusive but not seen as such by coaches. Coaches legitimize their mistreatment of athletes by explaining away their abuse and casting it as attempts at motivation and protection. Although the full magnitude of coach abuse is difficult to determine given the available research, in a 2011 study of 6,000 young people in the United Kingdom between the ages of 18 and 24 years, 75% of those responding indicated that they had experienced some form of coach abuse as a child while participating in youth sport (Alexander et al., 2011).

- Strand et al. (2018) surveyed 920 undergraduate students (half female, half male) who had participated in high school sports to determine bullying behaviors by their coach to which they were subjected and those directed toward other athletes. Out of the 24 different behaviors in the survey, ranging from taunting to ongoing sexual harassment, the top four categories included coaches having thrown something at them (16%); directed critical comments at them designed to hurt (20%); dirty looks meant to hurt (20%); embarrassing them in front of others (34%); poking fun at someone (26%); and being set up to look foolish (17%). When broken down by gender, male athletes were more likely to have something thrown at them by a coach compared to female athletes (20% to 12%) but female athletes reported being the target more frequently of critical comments designed to hurt them (23% to 17%).
- Through narratives from eight African American female college athletes, a picture of the racialized and gendered nature of the aggressive verbal communication used by their coaches emerged. Noting that coaches used various pressure points to manipulate them, such as modest or low family income, the players described behaviors that were threatening (loss of scholarship; language designed to create fear and intimidation); coaches emphasizing the dependency players had on their scholarships (“they own you”); coaches using terms intended to undermine the confidence of players (being told they didn’t amount to anything and were “ghetto” girls); and coaches using punishment (having to run laps for transgressions) (Ruggiero & Lattin, 2008).
- Emotional abuse is a common form of abuse that is an emerging area of research within the sporting arena (Gervis & Dunn, 2004; Kirby, Greaves, & Hankivsky, 2000; Stirling & Kerr, 2008, 2014). Scholars argue that emotional abuse is pervasive in sports but due to the fact that it is often hard to monitor it continues to permeate sport (Stirling & Kerr, 2014).
- Stirling and Kerr (2013) conducted a study that focused on elite athletes’ experiences of emotional abuse by their coaches within the coach–athlete relationship. The purpose was to identify potential effects of coaching abuse on the athletes’ psychological well-being, training, and sport performance. Participants in this study discussed emotionally abusive coaching behaviors that included “demeaning criticisms, name-calling, public humiliation, threats, continual yelling and swearing at the athlete, periods of being intentionally ignored, and acts of physical intimidation such as throwing equipment across the training facility” (p. 90).
- Kavanagh, Brown, and Jones (2017) explored elite athletes’ coping strategies in response to emotional abuse they experienced within the coach–athlete relationship. Results revealed that athletes develop various coping strategies to deal with the emotional abuse and utilize these strategies as the abusive behaviors continue through the coach–athlete relationship. The athletes used coping strategies to deal with the emotional abuse and to enable them to continue competing in the sport. The athletes also were initially silent about the abuse and tried to process the feelings and experience by themselves before seeking outside support (both formally and informally).
- The psychological, physical, and/or sexual abuse endured by athletes is often lumped under the umbrella term of non-accidental violence (Mountjoy et al., 2016; Roberts, Sojo, & Grant, 2019). Mountjoy and colleagues (2016) created a consensus statement about non-accidental violence in sport. They argued the successful prevention of abuse and harassment against athletes is dependent upon the leadership of the major international and national sport organizations.
- Roberts, Sojo, and Grant (2019) conducted a meta-analysis on literature that examined non-accidental violence in sport. The researchers found that “non-accidental violence is a pervasive and protracted issue affecting athletes of all types and ages, though children, elite athletes and those from stigmatized groups (e.g., women, LGBTQ, and athletes with disabilities) are more vulnerable to non-accidental violence” (Roberts, Sojo, & Grant, 2019, p. 17).

Table 4: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Perceptions of Social and Behavioral Barriers

Impact on Participation

- Overall, Olympic/elite and high school leaders had the highest concerns about safety (injuries) affecting female athlete participation in sport over the last 10 years.
- Counter to this, recreational league leaders had the least concern about injuries impacting female athlete participation.
- Olympic/elite-level leaders also had the highest concerns about sexual abuse impacting female athlete participation in sport.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

Female Athletes & Sexual Abuse

According to a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “about 1 in 3 women and nearly 1 in 6 men experienced some form of contact sexual violence during their lifetime” (Smith et al., 2017, para 4). According to Abrams and Bartlett (2019), “There is little doubt that sexual assault is an epidemic...” (p. 243). The rate of sexual assaults on college campuses have remained relatively stable for the past 20 years (Fedina, Holmes & Backes, 2016). At the college level, 23% of female and 5.4% of male undergraduate students have experienced rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (Cantor et al., 2015). Transgender college students are among the most vulnerable populations to sexual violence, with 25% reporting having been assaulted at some point during their undergraduate careers on campus (New, 2015).

The array of violence individuals in sport settings experience has been the subject of research for decades. In this moment, an awakening has occurred as a result of highly publicized cases of hundreds of female and male athletes suffering sexual abuse by coach and sport medicine predators and testifying in very public ways to the failures of sport officials and organizations to protect them and other athletes. There is growing awareness that sexual abuse in its many forms, from sex abuse to sexual harassment to sexual assault to interpersonal violence to rape, occurs across the expanse of sport spaces and can be perpetrated by individuals in positions of authority (e.g., administrators, performance directors, coaches, members of the media, parents, sports medicine personnel) or may occur between athlete peers and between colleagues (Parent & Fortier, 2018). While there is much more to be known about the extent of the harm done to athletes individually and collectively throughout the U.S. sport system, female athletes and women working in the sport industry have been particularly vulnerable to this violence and have had to live with its negative impacts.

In 2017, the U.S. Center for SafeSport (The Center) was given the authority by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct within the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Movements. The Center’s role was further codified in the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017, which was passed by the U.S. Congress in February of 2018. Beyond reporting protocols and standards for how sexual abuse cases are handled by individuals working with U.S. national sport governing bodies, the Safe Sport Act requires that adults working in youth sports are mandatory reporters, who must report suspected incidents of abuse to law enforcement within a 24-hour period of time. They must go through abuse prevention training that is proactive rather than reactive; and they must undergo a criminal background check (Sadler Sports & Recreation Insurance, 2018). The Safe

Sport Act is clearly a positive development in creating an independent avenue for alleged misconduct to be properly investigated and handled, but some say that the Safe Sport Act has not gone far enough to ensure that youth athletes are protected because it is an unfunded mandate that has no accountability mechanism or ability to punish those who fail to fulfill their mandatory reporting obligations (Haviland, 2018). As discussions continue on how to make sport environments safe for athletes and those who work in them, the data make a compelling case for why these issues must be at the top of agendas for public policy makers, sport administrators, parents, law enforcement, and media.

- Female athletes appear to be the victims of sexual violence in sports more than male athletes. Fasting, Brackenridge, and Kjølberg (2013) discovered that in 14 Norwegian court reports of 29 victims, only one case involved two boys and 27 were female victims. Vertommen et al. (2016) stated that 17.2% of the females in their study had experienced sexual violence while participating in organized sport as children. In contrast, 10.2% of boys reported experiencing sexual violence while in sport.
- Fasting, Sand, and Sisjord (2018) examined coaches’ opinions and attitudes towards coach-athlete sexual relationships. Three of the 36 coaches in the study admitted to having a relationship with an athlete. The majority of the coaches stated they felt relationships between coaches and athletes were problematic and believed it is important to have strict rules and clear boundaries.
- While many of the coaches in the Fasting et al study (2018) believed coach-athlete relationships were problematic, not all coaches felt that way. In 2019, Baillie Gibson sued the University of Arizona and her former Coach Craig Carter. Carter was arrested and convicted of felony aggravated assault for holding Gibson’s throat with one hand, putting a box cutter to her throat with the other hand, and threatening to cut her face. This followed what Gibson said was a years-long “relationship” that she argued was not consensual. The state of Arizona paid \$999,000 to Gibson to settle this lawsuit (Schmidt, 2019).
- Sexual abuse in athletics is not restricted to coaches and athletes. The most prominent sex abuse scandal in sports involved the USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University team doctor, Larry Nassar. Nassar abused and assaulted 265 known individuals over 25 years (BBC News, 2018; Mencarini, 2018). Over his career, Nassar was accused multiple times of sexually assaulting athletes he was “treating.” On January 24, 2018, Nassar was sentenced to 40 to 175 years in prison on sexual assault charges (Mencarini, 2018). Through the trial and an investigation conducted by the Indianapolis Star (IndyStar), it became clear that countless adults in gymnastics centers across



Wendy Hilliard Gymnastics Foundation

the country, USA Gymnastics high-ranking officials, and Michigan State University's athletic department and administration failed each and every victim Nassar abused. Winning and the pursuit of gold was prioritized over these girls' and young women's well-being and safety.

- While the Nassar case might be the most prominent case involving sexual abuse of gymnasts, it certainly is not the only one. An *IndyStar* investigation uncovered decades of abuse that often went uninvestigated and allegations that were dismissed (Kwiatkowski, Alesia, & Evans, 2016). The failure of USA Gymnastics to properly investigate or report the alleged abuse to authorities resulted in dozens of girls and young women being abused by coaches and others involved in the sport.
- As reported in *The New York Times*, the #MeToo wave was felt in the global sport of soccer. Within the first six months of 2019, women competing and working in soccer from at least five different countries on four continents came forward with their own stories of coaches and administrators engaged in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and rape (Panja, 2019).

Female Athletes & Mental Health

The National Institute of Mental Health (2018) defines depression as a mood disorder that can alter how a person feels, thinks, and deals with daily activities. Symptoms of depression must be present for at least two weeks and include "persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood; feelings of hopelessness or pessimism; irritability; feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness; loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities, decreased

energy or fatigue; moving or talking more slowly; feeling restless or having trouble sitting still; difficulty concentrating, remembering, or oversleeping; appetite and/or weight changes; thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts; aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause and/or that do not ease even with treatment" (National Institute of Mental Health, 2018, para 9)

In the United States, 17.3 million adults (7.1% of the adult population) have had a major depressive episode (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019). The prevalence of depression was higher in women (8.7%) than men (5.3%) and the age range with the highest incidence of depression was adults 18–25 years (13.1%) (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019). On a global level, there are 322 million people who suffer from depression, with women experiencing disability from neuropsychiatric disorders more frequently than men (42% to 29%) (World Health Organization, 2017). The World Health Organization (2017) notes that "Gender specific risk factors for common mental disorders that disproportionately affect women include gender based violence, socioeconomic disadvantage, low income and income inequality, low or subordinate social status and rank and unremitting responsibility for the care of others" (n.p.).

- In a study of 756 youth athletes between the ages of 6 and 18 years, female athletes (44%) as well as athletes who reported experiencing depression and/or anxiety were less likely to get the amount of sleep recommended for their age. Further female athletes who played their sports for goal-oriented rather than fun reasons were at increased risk of not getting the sleep they needed according to recommended standards. Due to the links between sleep and depression, female athletes may be more vulnerable to depression and anxiety symptoms (Stracciolini et al, 2019).
- In a study of 465 athletes who competed on teams sponsored by NCAA member institutions, 23.7% reported symptoms indicative of a clinically relevant level of depression. Of that group, 6.3% exhibited symptoms associated with moderate to severe levels of depression. Nearly a third of the female athletes in this study demonstrated signs of depression compared to 18% of male athletes (Wolanin et al., 2016).
- Covassin et al. (2019a) surveyed 296 first-year college athletes (125 males; 171 females) to assess the prevalence of depression and seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Findings revealed that 5% of college athletes in this sample reported symptoms of depression with 16.2% reporting a history of SAD and 10.8% reporting subsyndromal SAD. In contrast to previous studies, there was no difference between female and male athletes in terms of depression

symptoms and male athletes exhibited more SAD symptoms.

- Data from NCAA surveys showed that 48% of female collegiate athletes reported having depression or anxiety symptoms in both 2008 and 2012 (Brown, Hainline, Kroshus, & Wilfert, 2014). Cox, Ross-Stewart, and Foltz (2017) examined a sample of 950 NCAA athletes. They found 33.2% of athletes experienced symptoms of depression. Additionally, 25.7% of athletes did not know where to go to seek mental health treatment at their institution, and 44.5% reported not having received mental health training from their university athletics department.
- According to Edwards (2019), an analysis of data from the American College Health Association - National College Health Assessment for 854 college students (48 varsity athletes; 253 intramural participants) revealed that female college athletes as well as students of color presented profiles suggesting that they may be at greater risk of mental health disorders compared to other undergraduate populations.
- Interviews with 10 current and former female college athletes who experienced depression revealed that the challenges associated with keeping up with their sport and dealing with their depression left them feeling isolated and alone, with nowhere to go, physically drained and weary, confronted with self-doubt, and dealing with feelings of being out of control (Jones et al., 2014).
- Beable, Fulcher, Lee, and Hamilton (2017) found that 21% of elite athletes in their study met the criteria for moderate symptoms of depression. Additionally, 8.6% of athletes fell within the criteria guidelines for having a major depressive episode. The study found no difference between the depression rates of male and female athletes.
- Tahtinen and Kristjansdottir (2019) studied the influence of current anxiety and depression symptoms on intentions to seek professional help from a psychologist between athletes and non-athletes. Researchers found athletes had significantly lower rates of anxiety and depression symptoms compared to non-athletes. Anxiety symptoms were found in 20.2% of athletes versus 30.7% of non-athletes. Depressive symptoms were found in 20.9% of the athletes in the study versus 34.1% of the non-athletes. It is interesting to note that female athletes with depression symptoms reported lower intentions to seek help from a psychologist for their depression than female non-athletes with depression symptoms.
- Bader (2014) argues that sport participation can hurt individuals who are currently or may become depressed. If athletes with depression are forced to perform while they are in a depressive state, it can be

harmful to their athletic performance and their ability to manage their depression.

Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport & Eating Disorders in Female Athletes

Female athletes are vulnerable to a medical condition known as the Female Athlete Triad, which includes three components: low energy availability (with or without disordered eating), menstrual dysfunction, and low bone density. Female athletes who may train too hard and/or have complicated relationships with food (e.g., restricting food intake and types of food, bingeing, and/or purging) risk long-term issues with osteoporosis, bone fracture, diminished physical performance, and a range of psychological issues (depression, anxiety, body dysmorphia, obsession with body size, food anxiety, etc.) (The American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology, 2017). In 2014, an IOC expert working group introduced the concept of Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S) as a replacement for the term Female Athlete Triad in an effort to deal with the complexities for female athlete health and performance that go beyond what is captured in the Female Athlete Triad (Mountjoy et al., 2014).⁸

According to Mountjoy et al., (2014), “The syndrome of RED-S refers to impaired physiological function including, but not limited to, metabolic rate, menstrual function, bone health, immunity, protein synthesis, cardiovascular health caused by relative energy deficiency. The cause of this syndrome is energy deficiency relative to the balance between dietary energy intake and energy expenditure required for health and activities of daily living, growth and sporting activities” (p. 1).

The National Institute of Mental Health defines eating disorders as “serious and sometimes fatal illnesses that cause severe disturbances to a person’s eating behaviors” (2017, p. 1). The three most common types of eating disorders are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorder. The American Psychological Association states that individuals with anorexia nervosa “... have a distorted body image that causes them to see themselves as overweight even when they’re dangerously thin” (2011, p. 3). These individuals often refuse to eat or restrict their caloric intake, frequently exercise, and may refuse to eat when other people are present (American Psychological Association, 2011).

- In a study of 1,000 female athletes (aged 15–30 years) who completed a questionnaire, those who reported low energy availability exhibited a higher risk for a number of health and performance issues associated with the Female Athlete Triad compared to female athletes reporting adequate energy availability,

⁸ One of the reasons for the change in terminology from Female Athlete Triad to Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport is the fact that RED-S includes both female and male athletes that may exhibit components of this syndrome (Mountjoy, 2017).

including menstrual dysfunction, poor bone health, metabolic issues, hematological detriments, psychological disorders, cardiovascular impairment, and gastrointestinal dysfunction. Findings from this study are strongly associated with the health and performance consequences proposed by the Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport model (Ackerman et al., 2019).

- Bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder both involve eating excessive quantities of food. Individuals who suffer from bulimia nervosa purge the food after consuming it by vomiting or using laxatives or enemas (American Psychological Association, 2011). In contrast, those who have binge eating disorder do not purge the excessive calories from their bodies following the eating (National Institute of Mental Health, 2017).
- Eating disorders occur in both athletes and non-athletes. Wollenberg, Shriver, and Gates (2015) examined the pervasiveness of disordered eating between female college athletes and non-athletes. The sample of 376 non-athletes and 151 athletes completed two surveys: the Eating Attitudes Test and the Difficulties with Emotion Regulation Scale. Results indicated that non-athletes had higher incidence of eating disorders compared to athletes (16.5%, vs. 6.6%). The results also showed that the female athletes appeared to have better emotion regulation skills than non-athletes which may have contributed to the lower rates of disordered eating.
- While some studies have shown that athletes may have lower rates of eating disorders compared to non-athletes at the collegiate level, there are still female collegiate athletes that suffer from disordered eating. Wells, Chin, Tacke, and Bunn (2015) examined 88 female varsity athletes from eight sports to see if there was a difference between the risks of disordered eating in athletes in lean sports (cheerleading, cross country/track and field, swimming, and volleyball) and non-lean sports (basketball, golf, soccer, and softball). Results from this study suggested that athletes in lean sports displayed a higher risk for the development of disordered eating compared to athletes who participate in non-lean sports. The main influence of disordered eating in these female athletes came from social pressures from teammates, coaches, parents, and the media that impacted the athlete's exercise and nutritional habits.
- Kong and Harris (2015) also found that female athletes from lean sports reported higher levels of body dissatisfaction than athletes engaged in non-lean sports (such as ball sports). Additionally, the researchers found that this dissatisfaction existed regardless of participation level in the sport. The aesthetic sports of gymnastics, ballet, runners,

and synchronized swimming were found to have higher degrees of body dissatisfaction or disordered eating than in other sports or the general population (Anderson, Reilly, Gorrell, & Anderson, 2016; de Bruin, Oudejans, & Bakker, 2007; Ferrand, Magnan, Rouveiz, & Filaire, 2007; Kong & Harris, 2015; Robbeson, Kruger, & Wright, 2015; Varnes et al., 2013).

- In contrast to much of the previous research, Kantanista and colleagues (2018) assessed the level and differences in the body image among elite female athletes from a variety of sports. They found female athletes in aesthetic sports (synchronized swimming, gymnastics, and dance) had a more positive body image than the athletes in the non-aesthetic sports (floorball, soccer, basketball, volleyball, swimming, karate, rugby, and field hockey). The data illustrated that the type of sport (aesthetic versus non-aesthetic), as well as the athlete's age, BMI, and level of competition were all significant. The researchers hypothesized that the results may be due to the fact that the "athletes from aesthetic sports had a lower BMI than those from non-aesthetic sports. BMI was a significant factor explaining body image in these sportswomen" (Kantanista et al., 2018).

Injuries in Female Athletes

According to the Aspen Institute's Project Play, "...in 2017, 56.5 percent of children played a team sport in some form at least one time during the year — more than at any point in the past six years" (Project Play, 2018, p. 3). It is evident by the research that more girls and women are playing sport than ever before. However, an increase in participation numbers also means more girls and women are sustaining injuries while playing sports. An injury is defined as an incidence that (1) occurred as a result of participation in an organized practice or competition; (2) required medical attention by a certified athletic trainer, physician, or other health care professional; and (3) resulted in restriction of the college athlete's participation for one or more days beyond the day of injury (Clifton et al., 2018, p. 1039)

From the NCAA-Injury Surveillance Program (ISP) and High School Report Information Online (HS-RIO) systems, Clifton and colleagues (2018) collated the data generated during the first decade with these systems to examine girls' and women's basketball injuries. During the period under review, the researchers found that athletic trainers reported 6,817 injuries in girls' and women's basketball. The researchers then estimated a national injury rate for girls and women to be 848,206 injuries during this 10-year period (2004-05 through 2013-14).

Knee Injuries (most specifically anterior cruciate injuries)

An anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury occurs when there is a tear or sprain of the anterior cruciate ligament in a person's knee (Mayo Clinic, 2019). These injuries can occur with or without contact. Most ACL injuries occur in sports that require sudden changes in movement, sudden stops, and jumping and landing (Mayo Clinic, 2019). An ACL injury can also occur during a collision or when an athlete receives a direct hit to the knee.

- Women's athletics is plagued with injury incidence rates that are higher than those found in their male counterparts, predominantly injuries occurring in the lower extremities. Stanley, Kerr, Dompier, and Padua (2016) reported the sport of women's soccer had an ACL injury rate of 2.55 per 10,000 athlete-exposures (AE), which was substantially higher than that of men's soccer at a rate of 0.63 per 10,000 AE. The researchers found a comparable discrepancy in the sport of basketball (1.95 per 10,000 AE for women versus 0.70 per 10,000 AE for men).
- ACL injuries are responsible for 50% of knee injuries and are among the most expensive sport injuries due to the often-required surgery and rehabilitation (Joseph et al., 2014).
- An estimated 350,000 ACL injuries occur a year in the United States (Nessler, Denney, & Sampley, 2017). Research has shown that there is an increase in ACL injury rates in both youth athletes and collegiate athletes (Dodwell et al., 2014; Rugg, Wang, Sulzicki, & Hame, 2014; Wiggins et al., 2016).
- Using data from the NCAA ISP survey between 2004–14, Gans et al. (2018) found that college athletes experienced 1,105 anterior cruciate ligament ruptures, 126 of which were recurrent. The highest rates of recurrent ACL ruptures (per 10,000 AEs) occurred among male football players (15), female gymnasts (8.2), and female soccer players (5.2). Women's soccer players were found to have a significantly higher rate of recurrent ACL ruptures compared to men's soccer players. Overall, male athletes had a significantly higher rate of recurrent ACL ruptures (4.3) than women (3.0).
- The most common knee injuries for girls and women participating in sport involve an ACL sprain or tear (Beynnon et al., 2014; Joseph et al., 2013; Proffen & Murray, 2016). The peak incident rates of ACL injuries occur during high school (Beynnon et al., 2014).
- Female athletes are considered an at-risk population for ACL injury. In fact, they have a significantly higher injury rate than male athletes and the general population (Beynnon et al., 2014; Mihata, Beutler, & Boden, 2006; Prodromos, Han, Rogowski, Joyce, & Shi, 2007; Roos, Ornell, Gardsell, Lohmander, & Lindstrand, 1995).



Chicago Red Stars

- Among female athletes, research has shown that female soccer players are at the greatest risk for an ACL injury (Andernord et al., 2015; Brophy, Stepan, Silvers, & Mandelbaum, 2015; Paterno, Rauh, Schmitt, Ford, & Hewett, 2014). Allen et al. (2016) examined subsequent ACL injuries of female soccer players and compared those rates with female athletes from other sports. The findings showed that female soccer athletes have a higher risk of reinjury (28% overall and 34% of female soccer players who returned to soccer after their first ACL injury) compared to non-soccer female athletes (9%), especially when returning to competitive soccer.

Concussions

Within the United States there are an estimated 1.6 million to 3.8 million traumatic brain injuries that occur during sports and recreation activities (Langlois, Rutland-Brown, & Wald, 2006). A concussion is defined as “a complex pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by traumatic biomechanical force” (McCrory et al., 2013). Further, “sport-related concussions have been classified as a sub-type of mild TBI [traumatic brain injury]” (Conder & Conder, 2016, p. 89). In an overview of the research that has been done on sex differences between female and male athletes and how they experience concussions, Covassin et al. (2017; 2019a) reported that several things account for female athletes being at greater risk for concussions in most sports, including head-neck strength and the mechanism of injury. Female athletes are more likely to experience concussion from contact with a ball or playing surface while male athletes are more likely to experience concussion as a result of contact with another player.

- When examining concussions, research utilizes injury rate and time loss. Injury rate is defined as the number of injuries in a particular category (e.g., concussion) divided by the number of athlete-exposures (practices or games) (Covassin, Moran, & Elbin, 2016). Time loss refers to the total number of days from the time a concussion was reported to the day an athlete is cleared by a physician or athletic trainer (Covassin et al., 2016).
- After a concussion is sustained, the amount of time it takes athletes to get back onto the field varies. Foley, Gregory, and Solomon (2014) found that 50% of high school athletes who sustained a concussion returned to baseline cognitive function in 7-10 days and 90% returned to baseline in four weeks.
- Concussions are not only physical injuries that result in time loss. The majority of the athletes who suffer a concussion report post-concussion headaches (97% for females and 95% for males), and 77% of females and males reported feelings of dizziness (Frommer et al., 2011).
- Concussions have been studied in a variety of populations. Marar and colleagues (2012) compared injury rates for female and male high school athletes. Over a two-year period, 1,936 concussions were reported. The results revealed that in sex-comparable sports (e.g., boys' and girls' basketball or soccer) female athletes had a higher incidence of concussions than male athletes did.
- Lincoln and colleagues (2011) examined 25 high school athletes over an 11-year period. They found that girls had a higher ratio of concussions in the sports of soccer, softball, and basketball compared to boys.
- Frommer and colleagues (2011) compared symptoms, symptom resolution time, and time to return to sport between high school females and males with sport-related concussions. The researchers assessed 812 sport concussions and found there was no significant difference in the number of symptoms reported by males or females. However, the types of symptoms reported were different. Males were more likely to suffer from amnesia and confusion, whereas females reported higher levels of drowsiness and sensitivity to noise.
- At the collegiate level, Covassin, Moran, and Elbin (2016) examined the sex differences in reported concussion injury rates. Between 2004-05 and 2008-09, there were 1,702 concussions reported. Further analysis revealed that female athletes had a 1.4 times higher overall concussion injury rate than male athletes. Women's baseball/softball, basketball, ice hockey, and soccer had the greatest injury rates. Additionally, when comparing female and male soccer and basketball players, the female players suffered more time loss after concussion.
- Assessing the relationship between repetitive head impacts (RHI) and clinical concussion symptoms among 15 football players and 23 women's soccer players competing at the college level revealed differences. In the women's soccer players there were significant associations between RHI and visual memory and tandem gait (a measure of potential neurological issues). In contrast, the football players exhibited significant associations of RHI with King-Devick (a test involving the rapid processing of numbers presented to a subject on flashcards that measures suboptimal brain function such as eye movements, language, and attention) (Caccese et al., 2019).
- In a prospective study comparing results of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) tests for athletes with and without sport-related concussion (SRC), female athletes were found to have more clinically relevant MRI sequences indicative of mild-traumatic brain injury (MTBI) than male athletes who suffered sport-related concussions (Klein et al., 2019). The authors caution against overgeneralizing the results because of the relatively fewer female athletes represented in the study (N=138 contact sport athletes, 14 of whom were female athletes). They do, however, note that the findings in this study have been found elsewhere in the literature in other female populations. They further found that "...less than 1% of SRCs are associated with acute injury findings on qualitative structural MRI, providing empirical support for clinical guidelines that do not recommend use of MRI after SRC" (Klein et al., 2019, abstract).
- Knowledge and attitudes about concussions (familiarity with concussion symptoms, the implications of concussion, and the potential of increased risk from multiple concussions) were assessed in 72 Canadian college athletes (28 males, 44 females) in the sports of basketball, ice hockey, and soccer. Female athletes were found to exhibit greater knowledge about concussions as measured on the Athlete Knowledge Test (AKT) than male athletes but were less likely than male athletes to translate that knowledge into action and report that they had concussion symptoms (Jorgensen et al., 2018). This contradicts other studies that have concluded that female athletes are typically more inclined to report concussions and more likely to offer fuller reports of concussion symptoms than male athletes (Covassin et al., 2019a).

Part II. Title IX, Its Impact on the U.S. Sport System, and Its Enforcement

“As a high school coach I asked our athletic director during a coaches meeting how the school could justify violating Title IX guidelines and I was told that the school refused federal funding so it didn’t have to comply with the law — I was gobsmacked.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is comprised of 37 words that have had a profound impact on the educational experiences of students by generally barring sex discrimination in schools supported with federal funding and non-educational institutions that offer educational programming. Described by one author as the “little statute that could,” Title IX helped to open the doors of opportunity for girls and women in previously male-dominated fields and professions, thus creating pathways for more girls to dream of becoming — and more women to become — astronauts, carpenters, executives, journalists, lawyers, mechanics, physicians, presidential candidates, military officers, and professional athletes.

As Title IX approaches its 50th birthday in 2022, there is no doubt that the law has had a major positive impact on the prospects and possibilities available for girls and women in sport. The work, however, is not yet done.

In recent years, Title IX’s protections against sex discrimination have been brought to bear in advocacy for trans athletes and gender non-conforming girls and women. In response to efforts on the part of state legislators to ban transgender girls from school sports, ACLU attorney Galen Sherwin and Skadden Fellow Shayna Medley (2019) noted that such efforts to marginalize trans athletes are “...rooted in the same harmful history of gender discrimination and stereotyping that has impeded the achievement of gender equality in sports as a whole.”

Further, research shows that while school athletic programs have become more gender equitable, shortfalls

in opportunity and funding continue to disadvantage female athletes in significant ways. Evidence also shows that enforcement efforts are not as strong as they could be and that expected efforts to educate the citizenry about what Title IX requires and does not require in terms of equal access to athletics opportunity, equal treatment when girls and women play sports, and equitable distribution of athletic scholarship support, all need to be strengthened (Trahan, 2016). This section provides an overview of the processes used in enforcing Title IX and Title IX regulations pertaining to athletics. Each subsection of the report provides an introduction with research findings that highlight areas of concern that warrant policy consideration.

A. Title IX Enforcement: Title IX Coordinators & the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act

Athletics, as well as club sports, intramurals, and recreation programs, are covered under the broad umbrella of Title IX regulations. Enforcement of Title IX’s protections typically take on one of three forms (Carpenter & Acosta, 2005). The first is an internal review process conducted through a school where concerns from athletes, parents, and other individuals flow to a designated Title IX coordinator who is charged with education, monitoring, and oversight of the school’s Title IX compliance efforts. In an ideal situation, a Title IX athletic committee comprised of administrators, coaches, and athletes routinely conduct compliance checks and develop plans to meet Title IX standards. The second more costly and time-consuming method is legal action against a school in order to remedy Title IX violations. The third involves the filing of a complaint with one of two federal agencies charged with Title IX enforcement, either the Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (DOE) or the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section (Association of Title IX Administrators, 2015; Cole & Back, 2018). Regardless of the avenue concerned individuals follow in bringing attention to potential gender inequality in athletic departments, Title IX’s non-retaliation clause is designed to create environments that encourage reporting and prevent whistleblowers from being punished for seeking to remedy unfair sex-discriminatory practices in athletic departments (Rodkey, Kelly, Sonderfeld, & Staurowsky, 2019; Weight & Staurowsky, 2014).

After Title IX was passed, elementary schools were expected to be in compliance by 1976; junior and senior high schools by 1977, and colleges and universities by



Bridging the Gap

1978 (Cole & Back, 2018). The historical record is replete with evidence to show that the path to full compliance under Title IX has been a rocky one, with setbacks and delays (Staurowsky, 2016). One researcher referred to Title IX compliance efforts as being best characterized as “two steps forward, one step back” (Ford, 2016). Nowhere has this been seen more vividly than in the dynamics around the appointment of a designated Title IX coordinator by school administrators (New, 2015; Weight & Staurowsky, 2014). While the DOE’s Office for Civil Rights and DOJ’s Civil Rights Division are charged as federal agencies with Title IX oversight, the intention at the core of the enforcement mechanism is willing and affirmative compliance with the law because of its mandate to best serve all students and to do so with a strong and responsive monitoring system at the local level. The lynchpin in that local Title IX enforcement mechanism is the Title IX coordinator, a knowledgeable and trained individual who everyone in a school knows, who educates constituents about the law and coordinates compliance efforts. Title IX accountability is disabled if school administrators, athletics directors, coaches, athletes, parents, fans, media, and others are uninformed or misinformed about what the law requires (Nowicki, 2017; Staurowsky & Weight, 2011; 2013; Weight & Staurowsky, 2014).

- In 2015, schools had to be reminded again by the Office for Civil Rights that “A critical responsibility for schools under Title IX is to designate a well-qualified, well-trained Title IX coordinator and to give that coordinator the authority and support necessary to do the job” (New, 2015).
- A series of studies assessing Title IX knowledge among athletics administrators, coaches, staff members, and college athletes revealed a general

lack of knowledge about Title IX (Staurowsky & Weight, 2011; Staurowsky & Weight, 2013; Staurowsky, Zonder, & Reimer, 2017; Rodkey, Kelly, Sonderfeld, & Staurowsky, 2019).

- Knowing the identity of the Title IX coordinator is critical. In a study of nearly 1100 college and university coaches, just over 30% were aware of who their Title IX coordinator was, and 42.8% were not sure (Staurowsky & Weight, 2013).
- According to a study of high school athletic administrators conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2017, an estimated 51% were either unaware of who their Title IX coordinator was or felt unsupported by their Title IX coordinator.
- The U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that OCR officials were not aware of how closely Title IX coordinators worked with athletic administrators on Title IX compliance. In an interview with officials of an association that conducts Title IX trainings, it was the view of the trainers that high school Title IX coordinators’ familiarity with Title IX regulations pertaining to athletics was low (Nowicki, 2017).
- Half (50%) of NCAA Division I head coach respondents indicated that their department did not have a Gender Equity Committee (Weight & Staurowsky, 2014).
- Despite Title IX’s admonition that administrators refrain from retaliating against coaches when they bring forward concerns about Title IX compliance, in Staurowsky and Weight (2013) 12% of coach respondents indicated that they felt they might lose their job if they advocated for Title IX. Further, nearly 20% of female coaches felt they might lose their job if they advocated for Title IX, and 35% of coach respondents were either hesitant or believed it was too risky to bring up Title IX issues in their athletic department.
- In a study of athletics administrators, coaches, and staff within NCAA Division II schools (Rodkey, Kelly, Sonderfeld, & Staurowsky, 2019), 17% of respondents (N=157) did not know who their Title IX coordinator was, 23% were not aware that students should know who the Title IX coordinator was, and 25% were not aware of Title IX’s whistleblower protections.
- According to Staurowsky and Weight (2013), 83% of college coaches (N=1,093) reported that they never received any formal training about Title IX as part of preparation for their jobs.
- When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that they had received adequate Title IX education and training, more than a third of NCAA Division I athletic department personnel indicated that they disagreed (Rodkey, Kelly, Sonderfeld, & Staurowsky, 2019).

- In a study of athletics administrators (N=352), they evidenced a higher level of basic Title IX knowledge compared to coaches but still demonstrated significant knowledge gaps (Weight & Staurowsky, 2014).
- Among 1,303 athletes competing on teams in the Big Ten Conference (60.7% of whom were female), Druckman, Gilli, Klor, and Robinson (2014) reported that the “starkest finding is the evident lack of knowledge among athletes about the content and target of Title IX...”
- In response to the question “what is Title IX?”, nearly 40% of college athletes from NCAA Divisions I and III indicated that they did not know what Title IX is (N=210) (Staurowsky, Zonder, & Riemer, 2017).
- In a study of 1,615 athletes who competed on teams sponsored by Big Ten universities, Druckman et al. (2018) reported that there is strong support for the spirit of Title IX’s mandate. However, female athletes were far more likely to recognize that the allocation of resources did not reflect that mandate.
- When a panel of 1,372 adults were polled (through a Womens’ Sports Foundation (WSF) survey administered by YouGov America, Inc., 2017) about their attitudes toward Title IX, nearly six in 10 approved (57%), 9% did not approve, 23% indicated they did not know enough to offer an opinion, and 10% were unsure.⁹
- Sixty-two percent of adults responding to the WSF/ YouGov America, Inc. (2017) survey believed that it was important for the U.S. Department of Education to enforce Title IX. Adults with daughters who play sports (68%), women generally (68%), and African Americans (73%) exhibited a heightened belief that the U.S. Department of Education enforce Title IX.

In an effort to foster transparency in terms of the allocation of opportunities and financial resources to men’s and women’s athletic programs, the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act passed in 1994 requires colleges and universities to annually report participation data and budget allocations broken out by gender. Known formally as the Report on Athletic Program Participation Rates and Financial Support Data and informally as the EADA report, schools receiving federal funding must release their reports no later than October 15 each year for public review. Through the United States Department of Education’s EADA Cutting Tool, reports from two- and four-year institutions of higher education are located, providing access to data that can be organized by athletic association (NCAA, NAIA, NJCAA, etc.), athletic conference, and in other ways. The EADA database provides one of the most comprehensive sources for information about college revenues and expenses in the United States.

⁹ Due to rounding, the percentages add up to just over 100%.

As important as the EADA database has been in shedding light on how resources are allocated by gender within college and university athletic departments, there has been a concern that school administrators are not as forthcoming in their self-reporting of information about their institutions. Although Tatos’ (2019) investigation of the reliability of revenue and expense data did not reveal incapacitating problems with the EADA, recent court cases have raised questions as to whether athletic opportunities information has been falsified by some schools for the purpose of presenting a more favorable record in terms of complying with Title IX’s three-part test (Staurowsky, 2018a; Staurowsky, 2018b).

- While there have been calls that data provided by schools in EADA reports is unreliable because of typos and other errors, an extensive study of data documenting college athletics revenues and expenses gathered by the NCAA, USA Today, the Chronicle of Higher Education/Huffington Post, the Knight Commission, the Indy Star, and the U.S. Department of Education revealed that EADA data was reliable (Tatos, 2019). Tatos (2019) does not deny that there are periodic errors that arise in each of these data sets but notes the errors he found were not out of line with what is typically found in other data sets. He urges researchers, journalists, public policy makers, and litigants to be mindful of that reality and to take steps to identify those errors when possible.

Table 5: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Assessment of How Title IX Enforcement Has Changed in the Past 10 Years

High School (N=853)

- 47% indicated that enforcement has remained largely the same (not gotten better or worse).
- 45% indicated that enforcement has gotten better or much better.
- 8% indicated that enforcement has gotten worse or much worse.

College (N=1,318):

- 35% indicated that enforcement has remained largely the same (not gotten better or worse).
- 54% indicated that enforcement has gotten better or much better.
- 10% indicated that enforcement has gotten worse or much worse.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

Table 6: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Views on the Degree to Which Schools Comply with Title IX in the Area of Athletics

High School (N=877)

- 27% reported that schools had a strong or very strong record of compliance.
- 31% reported that schools had neither a strong nor a weak record of compliance.
- 41% reported that schools had a weak or very weak record of compliance.

College (N=1,155)

- 44% reported that schools had a strong or very strong record of compliance.
- 24% reported that schools had neither a strong nor a weak record of compliance.
- 33% reported that schools had a weak or very weak record of compliance.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

B. Title IX Standards: Equal Access to Participation, Athletic Scholarships & Equal Treatment

“It is disappointing to be almost 50 years in on Title IX and yet on high school and collegiate levels not enforced. Something must be done — enforcement not just education.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

Title IX’s application to athletics is given meaning in regulations passed in 1975 and interpretations published four years later that focus on standards of enforcement (Eckes, 2017). Ambiguities, misunderstandings, and neglect have often been resolved through lawsuits; and the Office for Civil Rights, in fulfillment of its role to oversee enforcement, has periodically issued letters of clarification to response to the need for more guidance (National Women’s Law Center, 2015a). Because Title IX is a federal spending law, there is a provision that failure

to comply may be met with the withdrawal of federal funding. To assist the public in finding out how resources are allocated to men’s and women’s athletic programs at the college and university level, schools are required under the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act of 1994 to make available an accounting of participation opportunities and document their spending for men’s and women’s sports in a report posted to the U.S. Department of Education website and on individual schools’ websites.

Title IX’s application to athletic departments covers three broad areas: equal accommodation (participation opportunities), equal treatment (other benefits), and athletic scholarships. The standard of measurement in terms of athletic participation is the three-part test of substantial proportionality, history and continuing practice of program expansion, and effectively accommodating the interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex (typically female athletes). The test is a way of assessing progress in offering athletic opportunities equitably to female and male athletes. Flexible in construction, schools need only meet one of the three parts in order to pass the test. Schools are cautioned that lack of funding is not a defense for offering athletic programs that are not gender equitable.

Title IX’s Three-Part Test of Athletic Participation

The three-part test assessing athletic participation opportunities begins with the question of whether female athletes are represented proportionally in the athletic population compared to their representation in the student body overall. In theory, for example, if 50% of the student body is female, 50% of the athlete population should be female. Critical to an understanding of what Title IX requires, the law does not require that schools offer the same sports or even the same number of athletic opportunities across the sports sponsored. Athletic opportunity is expected to be distributed proportional to enrollment. Further, a school may fail this part of the test and is presented with opportunities, through the two other parts, to present a non-discriminatory reason for why athletic opportunities are provided the way they are.

The second part of the test addresses a history and continuing practice of program expansion, whereby a school may acknowledge that their efforts to provide equitable opportunity fall short, however, they demonstrate that they are addressing those shortfalls in athletic participation opportunities through an executed plan of action that includes adding teams and resources in a systematic fashion for the underrepresented sex (which has historically been female). Even failing that test, schools can move on to explain that while athletic opportunities are not proportional and there is no history and continuing practice of program expansion, they have made every effort to fully and effectively accommodate the athletics interests and abilities of the underrepresented sex. In effect, for a school to

persuasively make their case under the third part of the test, they need to demonstrate that avenues to remedy existing gender inequities in participation opportunities were exhausted and the existing menu of offerings satisfies those who wish to play and are qualified to do so.

- When Title IX was passed in 1972, only 7% of high school athletes and 15% of college athletes were female. In 2017–18, the rate of girls participating in high school varsity sports increased to 43% (NFHS, 2018) while female athletes composed 43% of the college sports ranks.
- Even with an impressive 3.4 million opportunities for girls to play sports at the high school level in 2017–18, that number falls well short of the 4.5 million opportunities for boys who played high school sports that year (NFHS, 2018).
- Despite girls making up half of the students in high schools around the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), the number of girls’ sports opportunities in 2018–19 only slightly exceeds the 3.2 million opportunities for boys playing high school sports in 1972 (NFHS, 2019).¹⁰
- According to Nowicki (2017), “In terms of the percentage of sports participants of each sex, a higher percentage were boys (57 percent) than girls (43 percent). In terms of participation as a percentage of enrollment, boys participated at a higher rate than girls (43 percent and 34 percent, respectively.”
- According to the National Women’s Law Center (2015b), girls of color are doubly disadvantaged in terms of their access to athletic participation opportunities compared to boys of color as well as White boys and girls. Heavily minority high schools are more than twice as likely to have large gaps in athletic participation as measured by comparing athletic participation rates to the percentage of girls of color enrolled at those schools.
- “Thirty-eight years after Title IX’s enactment and thirty-one years after issuance of the Three-Part Test, most schools still violate the law and do not assess student interest” (Galles, 2017).
- In a 2016 study of 112 Pennsylvania colleges and universities, the Women’s Law Project found that in order to achieve gender equity in those athletic departments, 8,000 more participation opportunities would need to be added for female athletes.
- In an analysis of EADA data filed for the 2017–18 academic years, only 41 of the 1,084 NCAA (4%) schools reporting met the proportionality standard for participation under the three-part test, offering males and females athletic opportunities

¹⁰ Data reported by the U.S. Census Bureau regarding gender breakdown of enrolled U.S. high school students is from 2017, the most recent reporting year.

“The changing definition of compliance for Title IX allows schools to wiggle out of compliance. Narrow down the scope of compliance to one or two, not three, paths.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

proportional to enrollment while 100 (9%) institutions provided athletic opportunities to female athletes at rates beyond their representation in the student body. The vast majority of institutions across all three divisions – 87% or 943 – offered higher rates of athletic opportunities to male athletes disproportionate to their enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

- According to EADA data filed for the 2017–18 academic year, female undergraduates made up 53% of the undergraduate population at NCAA Division I institutions (2,224,913 of 4,178,026 students). On average, female athletes received 48% of athletic opportunities (85,782 of 181,432), representing a gap that falls short of enrollment by over 5 percentage points. In order to close that gap, schools would need to add 9,797 athletic opportunities for females (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- In 2017–18, only 8.6% of NCAA Division I institutions (30 of 348) offered athletic opportunities to female athletes proportional to their enrollment. Seventy percent of NCAA Division I schools (245 of 348) offered disproportionately higher numbers of athletic participation opportunities to male athletes, ranging from 2% to 34% above the ratio of male enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- In NCAA Division II institutions, 57% of undergraduates were female in 2017–18. Female athletes at those schools were offered 42% of the available athletic opportunities. Division II institutions would need to add an additional 18,300 athletic opportunities for females to close that 15 percentage-point gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Among NCAA Division II institutions in 2017–18, only 2% offered female athletic opportunities proportional to enrollment. The vast majority of Division II schools – 91% or 281 of 310 – offered male athletic opportunities at rates that exceeded the percent of males enrolled in the undergraduate population. Gaps favoring males ranged from 2% to 36% (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

- At the NCAA Division III level, females composed 55% of undergraduate enrollment while they were offered 42% of athletic opportunities. Division III schools would need to add 24,661 new athletic opportunities to adjust for this 13 percentage-point gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Among NCAA Division III institutions, only 1% of schools (5 of 426) offered female athletes participation opportunities proportional to enrollment. Similar to schools in Division II, 91% of Division III schools (387 of 426) offered athletic opportunities to male students at rates higher than their enrollment in the undergraduate population. Gaps favoring males ranged from 1% to 37% (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Between 1988–2016, there was a net gain in the number of teams offered in NCAA schools, with 594 added in Division II and 751 added in Division III. There was, however, a net loss of 330 men’s teams in Division I (Wilson, 2017).
- According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, of the 948 colleges that added women’s teams, 72% of them did so without cutting other men’s or women’s teams (Sabo & Snyder, 2013).
- In 2014, researchers at George Mason University requested final investigation letters from the Office for Civil Rights for complaints pertaining to collegiate club sports, recreation, and intramural programs for the years 2004 through 2010. They were told there were none (McDowell, Deterding, Elmore, Morford, & Morris, 2016). While this may reflect that these areas are run gender equitably, there is so little systematic information available that this cannot be assumed.

Title IX’s Analysis of Substantially Proportional Athletic Scholarship Allocations

According to Title IX’s Policy Interpretation (1979), for athletic departments that award athletic scholarships, those awards must be distributed to male and female athletes on a proportional basis (Policy Interpretation, 1979). What this means is that schools do not need to allocate an equal amount of money nor an equal amount of athletic scholarships to female and male athletes. The proportion of athletically related financial aid distributed to female and male athletes should match

“There is a stigma that still exists that men’s sports are deprived as a direct result of Title IX.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

their participation rates. This provision, however, does allow for disparities that can be justified on the basis of non-discriminatory factors, such as differences between in-state versus out-of-state tuition rates or variable tuition rates based on majors.

The composition of financial aid packages awarded to athletes is also subject to Title IX’s scrutiny and considered in the proportional analysis. Policies governing the composition of financial aid packages should not favor male over female athletes or vice versa. What this means in a practical sense is that there needs to be a proportional number of male and female athletes who receive full athletic scholarships up to the full cost of attendance rather than one sex receiving full scholarships while the other receive financial aid packages that include work-study and loans as well as scholarships. In order to be in compliance, the ratio of athletic scholarship allocations to female and male athletes must fall within 1 percentage point of their participation ratios (Osborne, 2017; Staurowsky, 2016).¹¹

Further, because the calculation of proportionality in the awarding of athletically related financial aid relies on a comparison of the ratio of male and female athletes to the ratio of money awarded to male and female athletes, a set of numbers that are different from athletic participation rates, a school may be in compliance with the athletic scholarship standard but out of compliance in offering an appropriate number of athletic opportunities. In an EADA report, this distinction is reflected in the definition of participation opportunities being based on “duplicated numbers” (meaning that one athlete may participate in more than one sport) and “unduplicated numbers” (meaning the number of actual athletes at a school). In effect, even if a school appears on the surface to be fairly awarding athletic scholarships, or even favoring female athletes, they may be engaging in practices that deprive female athletes of athletic scholarships because they are not offering sufficient athletic opportunities.

- According to EADA data for the 2017–18 academic year, female athletes received 44% of available athletic scholarships at the NCAA Division I FBS level. In real dollars, male athletes in that division received \$802,352,657 in athletic scholarships compared to \$627,006,177 awarded to female athletes, a difference favoring male athletes by \$175,346,480 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Only 35% of NCAA Division I athletic programs (N=45 out of 127) reported being in compliance with the Title IX standard of allocating athletically related financial aid within 1 percentage point of participation rates. Nearly half of the programs (N=60) favored males and 17% (N=22) favored females above the 1 percentage-point threshold in allocations of athletic scholarships.

¹¹ For example, if a school has a 50-50 participation ratio among athletes, the allocation of athletically related financial aid should be within one percentage point difference (49-51).

The percent of allocations above the threshold for male programs ranged between 2 and 11 percentage points; for female programs the range was between 2 and 8 points (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

- While total spending on athletic scholarships in NCAA institutions in Divisions I and II was in excess of \$3 billion, with female athletes receiving 46% of athletic scholarship dollars, male athletes received \$240,435,504 more in athletic scholarship assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- In an examination of EADA data for the academic year 2009–10, Yiamouyiannis and Hawes (2015) explained that while athletic scholarship allocations actually favored female athletes, the data was misleading if not considered in light of an 11-point gap between the percentage of female students enrolled and the athletic participation opportunities available to them.

Title IX's Analysis of "Other Benefits"

Beyond equal access to opportunity through participation avenues and athletic scholarships, the kind of experience a female athlete has while playing on a team or participating in a sport is affected by investments in operational areas that support athletic programs. These include scheduling of contests and practices, sports medicine and athletic training services, academic and tutoring support, officials/umpires/referees, money spent when teams travel (per diem, forms of transportation, accommodations), publicity (marketing and communications support); equipment and supplies (uniforms, training gear); and access to quality coaching.

Title IX's requirements do not demand that spending be identical on female and male athletes; however, it does look at the quality of the experience athletes receive as a result of spending. This allows for a recognition that some sports are simply more costly to run than others and that athletic departments may prioritize certain sports over others. In the end, the balance to be achieved is whether the experiences of female athletes are of a quality similar to that of male athletes.

With athletic departments relying on multiple revenue streams to fund their programs, some sports have historically generated more revenues through television rights, marketing deals, sponsorships, and donor support than others. Under Title IX, there are no prohibitions against such revenue generation; however, the benefits derived from those resources may not be isolated to one gender (Butler, n.d.). As an example, if a major donor wishes to support a male team, the team may accept that funding and enhance their program accordingly. In order to remain Title IX compliant, funding needs to be found to provide a similar benefit to a female team.

- In 2017–18, NCAA athletic departments across all divisions spent more than \$282 million on recruiting. Of that, only 30% was used on the recruitment of female athletes (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

- The most equitable spending on recruitment of female athletes was found in non-football playing institutions, with NCAA Division III non-football devoting nearly half of available recruiting resources (49%) to female athletes. The category with the least equitable allocation of recruiting resources was NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions, in which 26% of recruiting dollars went to female athletes (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- Of the more than \$13 billion spent on athletic programs at the NCAA Division I level in 2017–18, 45% was spent on men's programs (\$620+ million), 22% on women's programs (\$301+ million), and 32% (\$442+ million) to non-gender-specific allocations. Expenditures in men's programs are twice what they are for women's programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- At the NCAA Division II level, schools spent nearly \$2 billion to support athletic programs in 2017–18 with 43% supporting men's programs (\$834 million), 34% supporting women's programs (\$664 million), and 30% being allocated to expenses not designated for either gender (\$229 million) (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- In 2017–18, NCAA Division III institutions spent more than a \$1 billion on varsity sports. Of that, men's sports received 38% (\$488 million), women's sports received 28% (\$361 million), and 33% (\$127 million) was allocated to non-gender-specific expenses (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).
- In an analysis of data furnished through the NCAA Financial Reporting System, the largest gaps in expenditures between male and female programs, including total expenses, recruiting, scholarships, head coach compensation, and assistant coach compensation, occur in NCAA Division I FBS institutions (Wilson, 2017).
- According to Wilson (2017), NCAA Division III institutions exhibit the most equitable allocation of resources between men's and women's teams.

Part III. Representation of Women in Sport Leadership Positions & Jobs in the Sport Industry

“I think the perception is opportunities are there and processes are fair and equal, but they aren’t truly whether it be budgets, salaries, promotions, or how women leaders are viewed and evaluated by peers and administrators.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

In sport, women have historically been relegated to the sidelines, but increasingly women are transforming the sport industry and impacting the evolution of sport both domestically and internationally. To begin to understand the change taking place, we must look to models that point toward new levels of success. We also must understand where women have been within the sport industry in order to appreciate the current status. To address both new successes and ongoing challenges, awareness is the first step needed to gain a better understanding of the current landscape.

The juxtaposition of the increase of female sport participation over time and the decrease in the representation of women in sport leadership positions in some sectors of the industry (i.e., high school and college athletic departments) and the slow integration of workplaces in other sectors (i.e., professional men’s sport leagues) is an enduring paradox of women working in the sport industry. There has been an expectation that as more girls and women moved into the playing ranks there would eventually be a proportional increase in hiring women as coaches, administrators, and sport executives, but this has not happened.

Leberman and Burton (2017, p. 16) stated, “we continue to observe glacially slow progress towards the advancement of women into sport leadership.” However, there are many women who have reached the highest levels of leadership in sport, including Val Ackerman (Commissioner, Big East Conference), Stacey Allaster (Chief Executive Professional Tennis, United States Tennis Association), Renie Anderson (Chief Revenue Officer, National Football League), Kathy Behrens (President, Social Responsibility

and Player Programs, National Basketball Association), Valerie Camillo (President Business Operations, Philadelphia Flyers and Wells Fargo Center), Swin Cash (Vice President, Basketball Operations and Team Development, New Orleans Pelicans), Kathryn Cater (CEO, US Olympic and Paralympic Properties), Andrea Hirsch (Chief Administrative Officer, United States Tennis Association), Sarah Hirshland (CEO, US Olympic and Paralympic Committee), Li Li Leung (President & CEO, USA Gymnastics), Cynthia Marshall (CEO, Dallas Mavericks), Michele Roberts (Executive Director, National Basketball Association Players’ Association), Molly Solomon (Executive Vice President Producer at Golf Channel), Katrina Adams (President and CEO, United States Tennis Association), and Maryann Turck (COO, National Football League).

A. Women Working in Professional Sport & Women Athletes in the Corporate Sector

As the most recent Race and Gender Report cards from the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport reveal (Lapchick, 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; Lapchick, Estrella, & Gerhart, 2019), women are underrepresented in positions of power or influence at senior leadership levels across all sports.

- In the 2019 report for hiring women, the NBA received a B with 80.9%; the NFL maintained a 74% or a C; MLB held at 70% or a C, and MLS earned a C grade but declined to 76.8%. Only the WNBA received an A+ with a 97.6% for hiring women.
- At the top levels of leadership within professional sport in 2018 and 2019, 149 women served as Vice Presidents (VPs) in the NBA; in MLB, 86 women served as VPs; and 81 women served at VP level in the NFL. On MLS senior leadership teams, women’s representation dropped from a C- in 2016 to a D+ in 2017 and remained at a D+ in 2018. In the WNBA, 36 women served at the level of team vice president or higher in 2018, earning a grade of A.

Still there remains a paradox with more visible female athletes and more women’s teams at all levels gaining recognition and growing, yet an ongoing lack of women in leadership positions for these sports. For example, currently both the WTA and LPGA have men at the helm as commissioners of the longest-running women’s professional sports in the U.S. The WNBA hired Cathy Engelbert as its new commissioner in May of 2019 (Draper & Megdal, 2019). However, National Pro Fastpitch (NPF)

has a passionate Commissioner in Cheri Kempf who continues to chart new territory in media rights deals and sponsorships (*Sports Business Journal*, 2016). With this unprecedented success of women athletes and women’s teams and leagues, there is no question we are on the precipice of major change in the leadership of women’s sport.

- In the NFL, women’s representation at the management level in the league office was 35% in 2018, a slight decrease from the previous year. Out of the 33 individuals holding the title of CEO or president, one was a woman (Lapchick, 2019b).
- In MLB, there were no women who held CEO or general manager/president positions and 28.6% of senior administration positions at the team level were held by women (Lapchick, 2019c).
- Historically, the NBA has consistently had a better record in terms of hiring women than the NFL and MLB. For the third year in a row, the percentage of women serving in positions as CEOs and presidents within the league has grown. In 2018, “The percentage of women CEO/Presidents has increased three years in a row, as there are more women serving in this leadership position (seven) than all other professional sport leagues combined” (Lapchick, 2019a, p. 2).
- In the Women’s National Basketball Association in 2018, a third of the majority owners of teams were women (14) and six of the CEO/Presidents were women. Women also held half of the general manager positions (6 of 12). Half of the head coaches of WNBA teams were women (6 of 12) and nearly 60% of assistant coaches were women (19 of 32) (Lapchick, Estrella, & Gerhart, 2019).
- To date, a woman has always served as the WNBA President, first with Val Ackerman (1996–2005), followed by Donna Orender (2005–10), Laurel Richie

(2010–16) and Lisa Borders (2016–18) (Lapchick, 2018). As noted above, Cathy Engelbert became the fifth president of the WNBA in May of 2019.

- Another new trend is former WNBA players working on NBA teams. Jamila Wideman currently serves as Vice President of Player Development for the NBA, while Sue Bird works for the Denver Nuggets when she’s not competing for the Seattle Storm (Pelton, 2018; Voepel, 2018).
- In 2019, Tameka Catchings, a former MVP in the WNBA, was appointed Vice President of the Indiana Fever. This news came with the appointment of Allison Barber as the new President for the Fever (Woods, 2019).
- The NBA leads all professional leagues with five women who work as officials full time, and a woman, Michelle Johnson, serving as NBA senior vice president and head of referee operations (Reynolds, 2018).
- Since Lisa Boyer became the first woman to serve as a coach in the NBA during the 2001–02 season with the Cleveland Cavaliers, there has been slow growth in the number of women coaching in the NBA. In recent years, the pace has picked up with the hiring of Jenny Boucek (Dallas Mavericks, 2019 to present), Laurie Gottlieb (Cleveland Cavaliers, 2019 to present), Becky Hammon (San Antonio Spurs, 2014 to present), Lindsey Harding (Philadelphia 76ers, 2019), Niele Ivey (Memphis Grizzlies, 2019), Kara Lawson (Boston Celtics, 2019), Nancy Lieberman (Sacramento Kings 2015–18), Natalie Nakase (Los Angeles Clippers, 2018 to present), and Karen Stack Umlauf (Chicago Bulls, 2018), Teresa Weatherspoon (New Orleans Pelicans, 2019 to present) (Ayala, 2019; Hayes, 2019; University of South Carolina, 2019; Wojnarowski, 2019).
- In 2018, 10 women worked as coaches in the NFL (three full time; seven as interns). Not only did the NFL double the number of women coaches from the

**Table 7: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey:
Factors Women Sport Leaders Identify as Critical to Advancing Women in Sport Leadership Roles**

Professional Leaders

- Leaders identified stereotypical hiring perceptions as the biggest issue in the hiring and advancement of women in sport leadership roles.
- Leaders also identified bias in regards to women having family obligations as another major issue in hiring/ advancement.
- The lack of access to mentors was noted by those in the professional and corporate sector as the greatest hindrance to the development of women leaders.
- Professional leaders in sport noted that the biggest workplace climate issue for them was the perception that women are less competent than men at doing their jobs.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.



Dawn Riley, Sailing, WSF Past President with Oakcliff Sailing

previous year, but also this represented a growth rate of 1,000% from 2015 (Weinfuss, 2019). The Tampa Bay Buccaneers became the first NFL franchise to hire two full-time women coaches, Maral Javdifar (strength and conditioning) and Lori Locust (assistant defensive line coach) in April of 2019 (Connelly, 2019).

- In 2019 Team USA star and Hockey Hall of Famer Cammi Granato joined the Seattle Canucks to become the NHL's first female pro scout (Baker, 2019).
- Ernst and Young found 75% of women business executives reported their background in sport helped to accelerate their professional advancement. Their research has also shown that 94% of women in C-suite positions competed in sport, and 52% played sport at the university level (Ernst & Young, 2014). Interestingly, former athletes also earn higher annual wages by 7% compared to non-athletes (Ernst & Young, 2018).

B. Women Working in College Sport

The college sport workplace presents an uneven picture of progress and regression in terms of hiring women. While women dominated coaching and athletic administration positions when women's athletics programs were completely separate from men's programs in the 1970s, women lost ground in those areas after the passage of Title IX as men's and women's programs were merged (Staurowsky, 2016). There has been a precipitous decline in the number of female head coaches in women's sports (43% in 2017 vs. 90% in 1971) (Sabo, Veliz, & Staurowsky, 2016). Emblematic of this problematic hiring and retention pattern, only about 20% of all head coaches at the college level are women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Women hold a limited number of leadership positions in intercollegiate sport, including leadership at the athletic director level in

NCAA Division I (11%), Division II (18%) and Division III (31%) (NCAA Race & Gender Demographics, 2019a).

- Bias in collegiate coaching is associated with the gender of the coach, not the gender of the team. Many female coaches perceive gender bias (31%); fewer male counterparts recognize it (5%) (Sabo et al., 2016).
- More women fear unfair treatment, retaliation, and loss of their jobs if they express Title IX concerns (31%) vs. men (20%) (Sabo et al., 2016).
- With regard to coaching, in 2017-18, women made up 24% of the head coaching ranks within athletic departments across all sports (men's, women's, and co-ed) (NCAA Race & Gender Demographics, 2019a). Of that group of women head coaches, 21% were White and 3% were women of color.
- Of the 9,365 NCAA head coaches of men's teams in 2016-17, only 465 were women (5%). This pattern reveals how some of the most lucrative and often prestigious leadership positions in sport, college coaching, are difficult for women to attain (Lavoie, 2019).
- In a study of 971 head coaches working at institutions in seven big-time athletic conferences (American Athletic Conference, Atlantic Coast Conference, Big 12, Big East, Big Ten, PAC-12, and Southeastern Conference) between 2013-14 and 2018-19, there has been a very small but incremental increase in the percentage of women head coaches of women's teams. Women head coaches in those conference composed 41.8% of head coaches of women's teams in 2018-19 (LaVoi, 2019).
- When looking at turnover among head coaches in those seven major conferences, LaVoi (2019) found that many athletic directors "failed to capitalize on coach turnover and utilize it as a target of opportunity to hire women" (p. 3). Of the 124 head coach of women's sports vacancies, more than half were filled by men, which constituted 67 jobs that might have gone to women that went to men instead.
- The percentage of women coaching women's teams at big-time college programs ranged from a high of 80% at the University of Cincinnati to a low of 9.1% at the University of West Virginia (Lavoie, 2019).
- Of the 124 schools included in the study, only four earned an A on the 2018-19 report card for their gender equitable hiring practices: University of Cincinnati (80%), Central Florida (77.8%), Washington (72.7%), and Oklahoma (70%). In reviewing this data over time, a pattern has emerged.
- While eight schools went up a grade as a result of improved hiring of women coaches from the previous year, 10 schools went down a grade (LaVoi, 2019).

- Nearly 80% of athletic directors running college sports across all divisions (NCAA Division I, II, and III) are men (67% White; 8.1% Black; 3.8% other) with 20% being women (18% White; 2% women of color) (NCAA Race & Gender Demographics, 2019a). Thirty-five percent of associate athletic directors and 34% of assistant athletic directors were women (NCAA Race & Gender Demographics, 2019a). When broken down by race, 6% of associate and assistant athletic directors are women of color.
- According to Wilson (2017), no minority women held positions as conference commissioners in 2010–11. In 2015–16, minority women held two of the 142 conference commissioner positions.
- In 2016, women held 42% of the jobs within NCAA Division I conferences, 36.4% in Division II conferences, and 33.8% in Division III conferences. In 20 years, the hiring level for women in Division I conferences had not changed, while there was between 8–9% growth in hiring women within Division II and III conferences (Wilson, 2017).
- During the academic year 2015–16, women held 37 of the 142 or 22% of conference commissioner jobs. NCAA Division III had the highest percentage of female conference commissioners that year at 34% (Wilson, 2017).
- The highest concentrations of women working in athletic departments are found in these jobs: administrative assistant (92.3%), life skills coordinator (71%), athletic academic advisor (63.7%), compliance officer or coordinator (53.1%), and business manager (62.3%) (NCAA Race & Demographic Database, 2019a). The designated senior woman administrator position, a position required to be designed by the NCAA to foster greater engagement of women leadership in athletic departments, has 95.5% women.
- Jobs other than coaching and athletics administration where women are least represented include equipment manager (12.2%), head sports information director (12%), facility manager (16%), head athletic trainer (31.7%), ticket manager (45%), promotions (41%), and fundraising (40%) (NCAA Race & Gender Demographics, 2019a).
- When gender and race are accounted for, women of color are clearly the most underrepresented within the college sport workforce. Even in job categories where women dominate, women of color are underrepresented. For example, while 63.7% of athletic academic advisors are female, 46.5% are White; 11.5% are Black; 5.7% are other (NCAA Race & Gender Demographics, 2019a).
- In 2017 two women of color were named as NCAA Division I Athletic Directors. Carla Williams assumed the role at the University of Virginia (Bembry, 2017), a

Table 8: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Factors Women Sport Leaders Identify as Critical to Advancing Women in Sport Leadership Roles

Collegiate Leaders

- Leaders identified stereotypical hiring perceptions and bias towards women as the biggest issue in the hiring and advancement of women in sport leadership roles.
- College leaders noted the lack of female role models in leadership positions was limiting women’s access to leadership positions.
- Having fewer opportunities to advance was considered as the greatest hindrance in the college sector to the development of women leaders.
- Similar to professional leaders in sport, college leaders noted that the biggest workplace climate issue for them was the perception that women are less competent than men at doing their jobs.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

Power 5 school, and Desiree Reed–Francois stepped into the role at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Anderson, 2019).

- Regan and Cunningham (2012) extended Acosta & Carpenter’s (2011) work and found men are overrepresented as athletic directors (82.7%) in the two-year college system, and women leaders underrepresented (18.3%). Results from this study also provided evidence of access discrimination with male athletic directors more likely to employ men as head coaches of women’s teams (Regan and Cunningham, 2012).¹²
- Similar studies have also shown women athletic directors are more likely to hire women to work as coaches and within their athletic departments. This gendered hiring pattern has been reported in analyses of high school coaches (Lovett & Lowry, 1994; Stangl & Kane, 1991) and sports information directors at U.S. colleges and universities (Whisenant & Mullane, 2007).
- In a review of a select list of sport marketing firms that service college and university athletic department accounts, Staurowsky (2016) found that 21% of the principals were women. For 16 college consulting and executive firms, two were founded by women and another had two women co-founders, and women made up 25% of consultants (Staurowsky, 2016).

¹² Due to rounding, these figures add up to just over 100%.

C. Women Working in Olympic Sport

In 2000, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) established a 20% minimum threshold for the inclusion of women in administrative structures in an effort to address the gender imbalance in sport leadership at the international level (Staurowsky & Smith, 2016). Efforts have been made within the Olympic movement to achieve gender equity among athletes, yet women in leadership positions in international sport have not kept pace.

- Women constitute 29% of the IOC membership. In the United States, Olympic Committee representation of women stands at 37.5% of all members (Houghton et al., 2018); however, most National Olympic Committees have far fewer women. In fact, the worldwide average in 2016 was only 9%, far below the 20% stated goal established at the start of the new millennium. At the highest leadership levels, women represented only 5.7% of International Federation presidents, 12.2% of vice presidents, and 13.1% of executive committee members (Lapchick, Davison, Grant, & Quirarte, 2016).
- Women also remain underrepresented as leaders in national sport organizations. One recent analysis of National Olympic Committees found women were less than 20% of all board members, and 5% of all boards lacked any women (Ahn & Cunningham, 2017).

Underrepresentation of women remains remarkably consistent across all National Sport Organizations with the Australian Sports Commission and Sport England at 36%, and the Coaching Association of Canada at 27% (Cunningham, 2015, as referenced in Lough & Guerin, 2019). However, in 2018 the U.S. Olympic Committee hired the first woman CEO in Sarah Hirshland.

- As of summer 2019, 33% (199/594) of the positions available on the boards of U.S. national governing bodies for summer teams were held by women. Women held 33% of the positions on U.S. NGBs for winter sports (39 of 119) (Women's Sports Foundation, 2019, data compiled internally).
- Of the 66 "main coaches" for the U.S. team at the 2018 Olympic Winter Games, eight (12.1%) were female, seven of whom coached figure skating or ice dancing. This is a slight increase from the 2014 Games when women held 8.5% of "main coach" positions. (Houghton et al., 2018)
- Of the 42 NGBs that oversee the development of U.S. teams for the Olympic Games, 13 or 30% were chaired by women while two of eight NGBs for winter teams were chaired by women (25%) (Women's Sports Foundation, 2019, data compiled internally).

Table 9: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Factors Women Sport Leaders Identify as Critical to Advancing Women in Sport Leadership Roles

Olympic/Elite Sport Leaders

- Leaders identified bias towards women as the biggest issue in the hiring and advancement of women in sport leadership roles.
- Olympic leaders noted the lack of formal mentoring programs, the lack of access to mentors, and the lack of effective female professional networks were the greatest hindrance to women's access to leadership positions.
- Additionally, ageism was also identified as a factor limiting access to leadership positions for women in sport.
- Similar to leaders at other levels, Olympic/elite sport leaders noted that the biggest workplace climate issue for them was the perception that women are less competent than men at doing their jobs.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

D. Women Working in Sport Media

- According to the Women's Media Center (Bumpus, 2018), the presence of female sports editors at 100 U.S. and Canadian newspapers and websites fell from 17.2% in 2012 to 9.8% in 2014.
- In a 2017 study conducted by the Women's Media Center, 62.3% of news reports were written by men, compared to 37.7% written by women (Bumpus, 2018).
- Women entering sports journalism exhibit high levels of enthusiasm and express high levels of job satisfaction (Hardin & Shain, 2005). However, sport media organizations offered little flexibility to allow women to balance work and family obligations (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009).
- When faced with difficulties in advancing their careers, women sport journalists blamed themselves even though the problems they encountered in the workplace were gender-based (Whiteside & Hardin, 2010).
- Women working in sport media were subjected to sexual harassment frequently by sources and sometimes by coworkers (Walsh-Childers, Chance, & Herzog, 1996).
- According to Pedersen, Lim, Osborne, and Whisenant (2009), younger women working in sport media were more likely to be the targets of unwelcome sexual advances, sexually charged commentary, and sexual harassment from athletes, coaches, and coworkers.

E. Women Working in Sport: A Long Way from Fair Compensation & Treatment

At its most basic, the health of the U.S. sport system can be measured in the way it treats its women workers occupying myriad roles as administrators, athletes, coaches, entrepreneurs, executives, fundraisers, marketers, members of the media, and owners. The sport industry has met some major milestones in achieving gender parity, with increasing efforts to diversify the workplace, yielding increasing numbers of women hired into top positions within professional sport franchises, national sport governing bodies, and major college conferences.

Long-standing barriers to women's full enfranchisement in the business of sport have begun to give way in recent years as a result of efforts such as the one undertaken by the National Basketball Association (NBA) to develop strategies to address representation gaps across the league under the direction of Liliahn Majeed, the NBA's vice president for diversity and inclusion. During the 2018-19 NBA season, there were four women on coaching staffs, one being Becky Hammon, who made history when she was hired by the San Antonio Spurs in 2014. Reflective of the strategy Majeed described, 18 women also served in front office positions, another two held operations posts, three were referees, and dozens worked in athletic training (Pingue, 2019).

Addressing the importance of expanding hiring perspectives to include women, the World Economic Forum points out in its *Global Gender Gap Report 2018* that "Ensuring the full development and appropriate deployment of half of the world's total talent pool has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide" (p. v.). There are signals from sport industry officials that they are slowly recognizing this. Within the past five years multiple U.S. sport entities have developed initiatives to increase the number of women in the hiring pipeline and the number of women being hired into previously all-male roles and occupations.

"I have seen too many women have to quit coaching when they have children because they do not have child care or the support system to help them manage their work and family responsibilities."

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

The era of the #MeToo Movement, the awakening around the degree to which girls and women across industry sectors in the United States and worldwide are subjected to gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace serves as a compelling backdrop for the necessity of changing workplace cultures within sport entities. Research conducted over the span of decades has documented levels of sexual misconduct directed toward female athletes and employees within sport settings that range from 2% to 48%. From the trauma experienced by hundreds of female athletes sexually assaulted by former U.S.A. Gymnastics and Michigan State sports medicine doctor Larry Nassar to an NBA investigation that chronicled a 20-year history of ongoing sexual harassment and other misconduct on the part of former Dallas Mavericks president and CEO Terdema Ussery and others, the climate for many women in sport organizations has been shown to be physically and emotionally threatening, unwelcoming, and coercive (Cacciola, 2018). A year later, with new CEO Cynthia Marshall in place, the Mavericks have taken steps to turn around the franchise's workplace culture, though greater diversity and inclusion in leadership and the workforce, as well as new proactive policies and resources to address employee concerns. (Mautz, 2019)

In discussing the status of women in Major League Baseball (MLB), (former) chief diversity officer Renee Tirado commented, "Look, I think there is no sugar-coating this. There's a lot to do" (Hunzinger, 2019). Women across sport sectors are voicing concerns in unprecedented numbers. In this section, we identify workplace initiatives to identify and move more women into the hiring pipeline; explore the dimensions of the sport workplace climate and gender bias; examine recent efforts calling for pay equity and fair treatment for women workers in the sport industry; and identify workplace practices that hamper the ability of women to be successful in sport careers.

Sport Workplace Initiatives Targeting Women Hires

- The Women's Sports Foundation offers two funds in support of initiatives to advance women in the sport workplace. One is the Tara VanDerveer Fund for the Advancement of Women in Coaching (2019), which provides grants to colleges and universities in support of the development of fellowships to encourage women to go into college coaching. The Scott Pioli Fund (2019) provides financial support to women pursuing careers in coaching and scouting American football.
- WeCOACH (2019), formerly known as the Alliance of Women Coaches, supports women coaching at all levels, from youth through professional levels, with networking opportunities, professional development programs, and an organizational structure to move forward agendas critical to the advancement of women coaches.

“Girls need to see women leading more in the sports world. I think this starts with having more female coaches in youth sports. Encouraging and supporting women to coach and showing girls from an early age that women can and do lead successfully in sports will give girls more confidence to become leaders in the future.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

- Women in Sports and Events (WISE), which is the organization that serves as the leading voice and resource for professional women in the business of sports, offers mentoring and peer support programs, executive leadership programs, and scholarship support for professional development for the purpose of advancing women farther and faster in the sport industry (WISE, 2019).
- NASCAR’s Drive for Diversity Crew Member Development program – a program designed to not only encourage women to take the wheel and compete in the racing industry as drivers but also expand awareness among women about other jobs in the industry, including work in fan engagement and community building and serving as back-office staffers, crew members, and engineers (Foley, 2018).
- The National Football League’s initiative, the Women’s Careers in Football Forum, invites applications from qualified women for positions around the league and offers mentoring from NFL insiders about how to navigate the application and interview process (Weinfuss, 2019).
- In 2018–19, of the 50 women screened through the NFL’s Women’s Careers in Football Forum, 29 were hired in coaching, scouting, operations, and strength and conditioning at all levels of football (pro through high school). A record number of women, including Lori Locust, Maral Javadifar, Kelsey Martinez, Kathryn Smith, Katie Sowers, and Jennifer Welter have been hired as coaches by NFL teams (Connelly, 2018; Connelly, 2019).

- University of Notre Dame head women’s basketball coach Muffet McGraw announced in March of 2019 that she would only hire women coaches as a step towards addressing the critical shortfalls of women in coaching (Hunzinger, 2019).

Sport Workplace Climate & Gender Bias

- In a national study of college coaches, the Women’s Sports Foundation (Sabo, Veliz, & Staurowsky, 2016) found that female coaches reported gender bias in the workplace and a gender dynamic that negatively impacted their productivity and employment. Among the findings:
 - About two-thirds (65%) of current coaches felt that it was easier for men to get top-level coaching jobs, while three-quarters (75%) said men had an easier time negotiating salary increases.
 - More than half (54%) believed that men are more likely to be promoted, to secure a multiyear contract upon hiring (52%), and to be rewarded with salary increases for successful performance (53%).
 - More than 40% of female coaches said they were “discriminated against because of their gender,” compared to 28% of their male colleagues.
 - While 65% of female coaches agreed that they could voice opinions openly in their department, 35% disagreed. Just 36% of female coaches indicated they were “fully involved with the decision-making process” within their athletic departments.

“We have to stop expecting men and women to lead in the same ways. There has to be flexibility but also has to be support for when women who are ‘aggressive,’ ‘high spirited,’ ‘demanding.’ We can’t shy away from supporting women who are leading just because society views them as less or not as good.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

- While some female and male coaches were hesitant to speak up about gender bias and Title IX inside their athletic departments, even more expressed reservations about doing so with university officials outside of the athletic department. Overall, 31% of female coaches and 20% of male coaches in this study believed that they would “risk their job” if they spoke up about Title IX and gender equity. LGBTQ female coaches were the most apt to fear raising concerns about Title IX and gender equity, with 34% believing they would risk their jobs if they spoke up.
- Over four decades, scholars have found the concept of power explains the slow progress in hiring women in the sport industry better than any other. “It is precisely because women are gaining access, popularity and power; growing in unprecedented numbers; and achieving prestige in a social institution created and dominated by men, that sportswomen are routinely marginalized by the media, denied access to and pushed out of positions of power in sport that matter and are visible” (LaVoi, Baeth & Calhoun, 2019). Power is the core construct explaining the limited number of women in leadership and executive positions in sport.
- A newly developed conceptual model describes how power manifests in the selection and promotion of women to top-level positions (Auster & Prasad, 2016). This model has been applied to senior leadership positions in sport organizations to understand how women are selected and promoted (Burton & Leberman, 2017).
- An initial component of this model is the creation of a dominant ideology of leadership. This description of what leadership “should be” has been generated and perpetuated by those currently holding positions of power, which means predominantly White men. Application of this ideology then perpetuates role definitions used to evaluate candidates for leadership positions. With the power held by “in-group” members with similar attributes (e.g., White, male, and heterosexual), applicants from out-groups experience bias when seeking promotion to a leadership position (Auster & Prasad, 2016).
- Hiring practices, including evaluation of candidates, decision-making protocols, and committee selection, are impacted by power held by those on hiring committees and can negatively impact those who do not reflect “in-group” membership. These processes then influence promotion bias and promotion



Natasha Watley Foundation

outcomes, potentially impacting women over the course of their careers (Auster & Prasad, 2016).

- In a study of how female and male college athletes were perceived in terms of employability for internships, a panel of 1,036 subscribers of a local newspaper was asked to review and evaluate resumes of a female athlete, a male athlete, and a male student that, on paper, were identical candidates. Despite similar observable credentials, the resume for the male athlete was rated higher in terms of unobservable qualities such as leadership, intelligence, motivation, and interpersonal skills over the female athlete resume and the male student resume. These findings held whether the resumes indicated that the candidate had previously done an internship or not (Dwyer & Gillick, 2018).
- In an assessment of how the gender of coach impacts performance of teams, Darvin, Pegoraro, and Berri (2018) collected data for 1,522 players who competed in the WNBA over the span of 19 seasons and 4,000 NCAA women's basketball players for three seasons. The gender of the coach was found to have no impact on the performance of players, lending support for

the conclusion that positive associations of coaching success with maleness is grounded in a prejudicial social construction, not in objective reality.

- Most women are not impacted at the penultimate point in their sport career, but instead the barriers and challenges they face cause many to leave at multiple points along their career paths, leading to a reduced pipeline or smaller pool of qualified candidates to draw upon when senior-level positions open (Hancock & Hums, 2016). The glass ceiling can be evident at multiple stages of a career progression, but it often is perceived as an impenetrable barrier, causing women who have reached this point to select a different career path or field altogether.
- According to the concept of the "glass cliff," female leaders are more likely to be hired into situations that present more complex and messier management challenges that increase the likelihood of failure. Either she will be savior for the beleaguered organization by succeeding in lifting it out of crisis, or, if she fails to restore the organization's credibility, she will find this was her one opportunity for a leadership position. Men are far more often recycled in

Table 10: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey

- Just over half of the women sport leaders surveyed (51%) reported that men were favored over women in their workplace when it came to assessments of job performance.
- Sixty-three percent of women leaders of women's sports reported experiencing sex discrimination in the workplace.
- For women sport leaders of women's sports who experienced sex discrimination in the workplace, 70% indicated that the discrimination they faced had a negative or large negative impact on them.
- While 38% of women sport leaders reported that the culture in which they work has gotten better over the past 10 years in terms of not requiring conformity to sex stereotypical behaviors, 46% indicated that the culture they work in remains largely unchanged from what it was 10 years ago, and 15% indicated that an insistence on adhering to sex stereotypical behaviors had gotten worse or much worse.
- When asked to compare how competent women were perceived to be in the sport workplace today compared to 10 years ago, 44% indicated that there had been no change, 38% indicated that women's competence was viewed better or much better than 10 years ago, and 17% indicated that perceptions of women's competence in sport workplaces was worse or much worse than 10 years ago.
- Women sport leaders report that there has been some improvement in workplace climate around issues related to homophobia (51%), transphobia (25%), racism (37%), religious bias (25%), anti-semitism (25%), ageism (13%) and the treatment of people with disabilities (29%). However, there is much more work to be done in all of these areas.
- While there have been pockets of improvement in the workplace climate of women working in sport, women sport leaders report that much of what they face in terms of workplace biases remains largely the same or have gotten worse over the past 10 years. Strong minorities report that homophobic (35%) and racist attitudes (44%) in their workplaces have not changed, while 14% and 19% of women sport leaders report that homophobia and racism have gotten worse or much worse in their workplaces.
- Perspectives that seem to have changed the least during the past 10 years in the places where women sport leaders work include treatment for people with disabilities (64%), religious bias (63%), anti-semitism (65%), ageism (58%), and transphobia (51%).

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

leadership positions, whereas women experience the one-and-done situation, thus deeming it the “glass cliff” (Lough & Guerin, 2019).

- In a study of the prevalence of workplace bullying (WPB) in the college setting, of 723 athletic trainers (329 female, 394 male) surveyed about their experience, 14% were identified as having been bullied. While there was no significant difference in terms of the gender of athletic trainers and the incidence of bullying, perpetrators were more often to male (74%) than female (26%). Among those identified as bullies, the largest group were coaches (38%) (Weuve et al., 2014).
- An assessment of WPB in secondary school settings revealed that among 567 athletic trainers (57% female, 43% male), 12.4% self-identified as bullying targets. While there was no difference between female and male athletic trainers in terms of likelihood of being bullied, more perpetrators were male (72%) than female (28%). The majority of bullies were coaches and administrators (Pitney, Weuve, & Mazerolle, 2016).
- In a study of women’s college soccer teams and head coach changes, Wicker et al. (2019) found that the gender of the coach was not a significant factor in firing after a losing season. Women coaches were more likely to be chosen to lead teams that were performing poorly, lending empirical support to the notion that women coaches are precariously positioned on the “glass cliff” more often in the coaching job market than men.

Pay Inequities Throughout U.S. Sport Systems

“To have equal prize money in the majors sends a message. It’s not about the money, it’s about the message.”

– Billie Jean King

- In March of 2019, players on the U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team (USWNT) filed a lawsuit against their employer, the U.S. Soccer Federation, alleging that they were subjected to systemic sex discrimination resulting in unequal pay and inequitable treatment (Das, 2019).
- Under the existing bonus structures in place, a player on the USWNT could earn up to \$200,000 for winning the World Cup. In contrast, her male counterpart on the U.S. Men’s National Soccer Team (USMNT) could earn up to \$1,114,429, a gap of \$730,000 (Murray & Morris, 2019).

- The U.S. received \$4 million of a \$30 million prize pool for winning the World Cup on July 7, a small percentage of the \$38 million from a \$400 million pool that France got for winning the 2018 men’s World Cup. FIFA has increased prize money for the 2022 men’s World Cup to \$440 million and FIFA President Gianni Infantino said July 5 that he was proposing FIFA double the women’s prize money to \$60 million for 2023 (ESPN, 2019a).
- Consistent with the USWNT’s claims that the treatment they faced was part of systemic discrimination, it was revealed a few weeks after the 2019 Women’s World Cup that national team head coach Jill Ellis was leaving the program over a salary dispute. Although the U.S. Soccer Federation offered her a salary increase from \$300,000 to \$500,000, she was making far less than two former USMNT coaches, Jurgen Klinsmann, who reportedly made \$3.3 million in the final year of his contract in 2016, and Bruce Arena, who made \$899,348 in 2017 (Frazee, 2019).
- The Women’s National Basketball Players Association (WNBPA) opted out of their collective bargaining agreement (CBA) at the end of 2019 instead of waiting for the expiration date of 2021 because of unacceptable work conditions. The players are challenging a cap that limits base salary to \$117,500 a season and further limits what they can earn when working in the off-season (Baumann, 2019).
- The WNBPA’s concerns include poor management of the NY Liberty, which suffered a 70% decrease in attendance after the team was moved from playing home games at Madison Square Garden (where they drew an average of 10,000 per game) to the Westchester County Center in White Plains, New York (a 5,000-seat arena). A similar venue change was made for the Washington Mystics, who had been playing in the 20,000-seat Capital One Arena and was moved to an arena in Congress Heights that seats 4,200 (Baumann, 2019).
- The WNBPA is seeking a 50% share of the revenue generated by their colleagues, a percentage which is equal to the share that the players in the NBA receive (Baumann, 2019).
- In 2017, the USA women’s ice hockey team threatened to boycott the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championship due to pay inequities and lack of equal treatment in the areas of equipment, per diem, publicity, staff, and travel (Bach, 2018). Following a 15-month negotiation, the women’s ice hockey players were given the opportunity to earn as much as \$70,000 each year, a substantial increase over the \$6,000 they had earned every four years previously (Bach, 2018).
- At the National Hockey League’s (NHL) All-Star Weekend in 2019, U.S. women’s hockey player Brienne

Decker competed in the Premier Passer event as a “demonstration,” meaning that she was not a member of one of the NHL teams featured at the event. She “unofficially” won the event with a time that was three seconds faster than the best men’s time but was declared ineligible to receive the \$25,000 prize. Following public outcry on social media, sponsor CCM Hockey stepped in to pay Decker for her performance (CBC Sports, 2019).

- As Bodo (2018) reported, the pay gap in prize money in the sport of professional tennis took decades to close. The contributions of Billie Jean King and other women tennis players in the 1970s resulted in the US Open offering equal prize money to men and women in 1973; Wimbledon would be the last major to fall in line and offer equal prize money in 2007, with Serena Williams becoming a vocal advocate for change (Bodo, 2018).
- Based on median financial data reported by schools to the NCAA for the 2015–16 academic year, head coaches of women’s teams in Division I received 30% of dollars allocated for all head coach salaries in Division I. When broken out further within Division I sub-categories, the percent of total salary allocated to head coaches of women’s sports was 26% in Division I–FBS, and 41% in Division I–FCS, and 39% in Division I non-football (Wilson, 2017).
- In Division II, the share of total salary dollars available that went to head coaches of women’s teams was 48%, and in Division III, it was 47% (Wilson, 2017).

A Culture of Gender Bias in the Sport Workplace

“Until society enables women to coach, compete, have families without demeaning them and belittling them, it will not change.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

- In a study of women working in conference offices, Taylor, Siegele, Smith, and Hardin (2018) found that balancing personal and professional obligations was a particular challenge. They did find support, however, in mentorship relationships that grew organically as they settled into their positions, and the women reported experiencing limited sexism in their work. However, when discussing specifics, they all commented that they had to deal with sexism, signaling a culture of gender normalcy in conference offices.

Table 11: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Gender Bias in the Workplace

- 43% reported that their gender prevented them from receiving a promotion.
- 60% reported being paid less for doing the same job as a man at their institution.
- 26% reported that they lost a job in sports because of their gender.
- 47% reported that they were evaluated differently because of their gender.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.

- When 10 NCAA Division I female athletic directors were interviewed about working in a primarily male-dominant environment, they indicated that success hinged on the commitment institutions had to promoting inclusive environments and their own ability to accumulate human and social capital (Taylor & Wells, 2017).
- Women and minority senior athletics administrators report being held to different job expectations and standards and greater levels of occupational segregation than their White male counterparts, which presents barriers to advancement (Wells & Kerwin, 2017).
- Thirty-three percent of female coaches indicated that they were vulnerable to potential retaliation if they ask for help with a gender-bias situation. Almost half (48%) of the female coaches and just over a quarter of the male coaches (27%) in the study reported “being paid less for doing the same job as other coaches.” Twice as many female coaches as male coaches felt their performance was evaluated differently because of gender (15% versus 6%) (Sabo, Veliz, & Staurowsky, 2016)
- Thirty-six percent of female coaches and 27% of male coaches agreed that their job security was “tenuous.” More female coaches (46%) than male coaches (36%) reported being called upon to perform tasks that were not in their job descriptions. While 5% of male coaches believed that male coaches were “favored over female coaches” by management, 31% of female coaches believed so. Just 35% of female coaches felt men and women “are managed in similar ways,” compared to 61% of male coaches (Sabo et al., 2016)
- Eighty-two percent of White coaches felt comfortable expressing concerns about racial and ethnic discrimination, while 62% of Black coaches shared that sentiment (Sabo et al., 2016).

- Among head coaches of women’s teams, 15% of female coaches and 9% of male coaches reported that they found a “noticeable level of homophobia” among some of their colleagues. Similar numbers found it “difficult to speak up” about homophobia within their athletic departments. More LGBTQ coaches (29% male and 21% female) believed that their athletic department hampered them from speaking up about homophobia than heterosexual coaches (9% males and 14% females) (Sabo et al., 2016).
- While 78% of heterosexual female coaches and 84% of LGBTQ female coaches indicated it is “easier for men to get top-level coaching jobs,” just 32% of the heterosexual male coaches and 57% of the LGBTQ male coaches did so. Among female coaches, 78% of heterosexual and 96% of LGBTQ minorities believed that men had an easier time negotiating salary raises. In contrast, just 33% of heterosexual male coaches and 57% of LGBTQ male coaches believed that (Sabo et al., 2016).
- For women in coaching, LaVoi and Dutove (2012) identify alienation, feeling pressure to over-perform, increased risk of sexual harassment, wage inequalities, and fewer opportunities for advancement as some of the detrimental effects of sexism.
- Several scholars have recently examined the underrepresentation of women in sport leadership (Burton, 2015; Burton & LaVoi, 2016; Leberman & Burton, 2017; Dixon & Cunningham, 2006), finding gender issues in sport are often subtle, and typically “found in unintended places, like structures, policies, and behaviors embedded in each sport organization” (Fink, 2008, p. 147). For this reason, the gendered nature of power must be scrutinized to challenge the resulting impact on women’s experiences in sport leadership and identify actions that can continue the evolution of inclusion in sport.



Ellen Tomek, Rowing, WSF Travel & Training Fund recipients with participants of Row New York

Part IV. Quantity and Quality of Sport Media Coverage of Female Athletes

“Media plays a big role in how we see sports and who we value in sports. If female athletes are seen and respected, more will want to be part of a team, learn a sport or even consider sports writing, etc.”

— Respondent, Female Leaders in Sport Survey

Researchers have suggested that the number of published articles on topics of gender, sport, and media number in the thousands (Bruce, 2016; Thorpe, Tofolletti & Bruce, 2017). One of the longstanding trends in this body of scholarship is the underrepresentation of women’s sports and the objectification and trivialization of sportswomen in media.

- Longitudinal research examining the coverage of men’s and women’s sports on televised news and highlight shows has found that the coverage of women’s sports has declined over the 25-year time period (1989–2014) with only 3.2% of coverage devoted to women’s sports in 2014 (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015). According to that same study, ESPN’s SportsCenter devoted 1.3–2.2% of its coverage to women’s sports during a 15-year time period (1999–2014).
- These trends extend to other media platforms and in countries outside the United States. In a 2011 study examining newspapers in 20 different countries worldwide, stories on women’s sports composed only 11% of the coverage (Horky & Nieland 2013; as cited in Bruce 2016).
- These trends are also reflected in the media representations of female Olympic athletes on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* over the span of 60 years, where there has been a shift toward somewhat greater coverage, but female athletes continue to be sexually objectified (Dafferner et al., 2019).
- With minor exceptions during international competitive events (what scholars term “sports mega-events”) such as the FIFA World Cup (Bell & Coche, 2018; Petty & Pope, 2019) and the Olympic Games (Arth, Hou, Rush, & Angelini, 2018; Billings, Angelini & MacAuthur, 2017; Houghton, Pieper, & Smith, 2018), as well as local news (Kaiser, 2018) or niche media outlets (Wolter, 2015), the vast majority of sport media coverage centers on men’s sports (Billings & Young, 2015; Cooky et al., 2015; Eagleman, Pedersen & Wharton, 2009; Hull, 2017; Kane, LaVoi, & Fink, 2013; Turner, 2014; Weber & Carini, 2013).
- Even within the sparse media coverage given to the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games, which amounted to only 34 articles published on four major online websites (ESPN, NBCOlympics, *New York Times*, and *USA Today*) 44% were about male athletes, 21% about female athletes, and 35% about both male and female athletes (Houghton et al., 2018).
- Recent research examining online and social media also indicate similar trends in coverage, with the majority of content devoted to male athletes and men’s sports. For example, a recent study examined 1,587 Instagram images from the primary accounts of the four major American sports networks and found women’s coverage lags significantly behind men’s. The researchers also noted how sportswomen are more likely to appear alongside their male counterparts in culturally “appropriate” sports and in nonathletic roles (Romney & Johnson 2019).
- Moreover, men’s sports are often produced in more visually exciting ways through the use of more camera angles, diversity of shot types, and the use of graphics and special effects (Greer, Hardin, & Homan 2009; Cooky et al., 2015).
- Sports media coverage often minimizes sportswomen’s athleticism (Kian & Clavio, 2011) and represents women and female athletes as sexual objects (Messner & Montez De Oca, 2005; Kane, 2011; Kim & Sagas, 2014).
- Studies show female athletes are more likely to be featured off the court and out of uniform (Buysse & Embser-Herbert, 2004; Cranmer, Brann, & Bowman, 2014) with an emphasis on women’s adherence to heteronormative femininity (Cooky, Messner, & Hextrum, 2013; Musto & McGann, 2016).
- Media portrayals of elite athletes with disabilities reflect not only similar patterns in terms of less coverage being devoted to female athletes, but due to the negligible coverage of athletes with disability in general, female athletes with disabilities are rendered nearly invisible by the press (Rees et al., 2019).

- Nuances to offer greater insight about women athletes often fail to surface because of locked-in culture frames. As an example, Shireen Ahmed (2016), in writing about what she called the fetishization of U.S. Olympian Ibtihaj Muhammad's headscarf itself obscured her accomplishments as an athlete on the world stage, overlooked the fact that Muslim women compete both veiled and unveiled and have had a much longer history of competing in sport than limited and narrow media coverage reports.
- Scholars have argued that sexualized and objectified representations detract viewers from sportswomen's athleticism (Daniels 2012; Daniels & Wartena, 2011). Moreover, these images do not represent how sportswomen themselves want to be represented and do little to promote or foster fan and consumer interest in women's sports (Krane et al., 2010; Kane et al., 2013).

There are some indicators that these trends may be shifting. For example, Bruce (2016) in her review of literature on sport, gender, and media coverage suggests a shift in the "rules of representation" of women's sports from lower production values, gender marking, and ambivalence (rules that we also found in earlier iterations of this study) to a "pretty but powerful" discourse, in part shaped by the emergence of online and social media (p. 361).

- Recent research suggests when users produce content on social media, the ways in which sportswomen are represented challenges gender stereotypes in women's sports. In a study examining the #SheBelieves hashtag on Instagram posts after the 2015 Women's World Cup, researchers examined athlete photos and found users primarily portrayed women as athletically competent (Pegoraro et al., 2018). This suggests the potential for social media to offer a space for diverse representations of sportswomen when the content is produced by individual users; these presentations differ from legacy sports media's content on social media sites (see: Romney & Johnson, 2019).
 - In a WSF study of women in the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, media coverage favored female athletes over male athletes. Of the total number of stories generated, 43% focused on female athletes, compared to 40% to men and another 17% that discussed both women and men. Photographic coverage also favored female athletes on online media sources, where women were featured in 47% of photographs, compared to men being featured in 43%. As a benchmark, these findings demonstrate a positive change in the coverage of women's sport. In comparison, in 2010, 62% of sport media coverage was devoted to male athletes with 37.6% to female athletes (Houghton et al., 2018; Smith & Wren, 2010).
- While the majority of studies examining gender differences in sport media tend to focus on comparisons between men's and women's sports, and/ or examine gendered representations of sportswomen, studies increasingly include an intersectional perspective offering nuanced understandings of how coverage and representation of sportswomen is shaped by racial identities, and other social locations. For example, scholars have noted the hypersexualized racialized portrayals of sportswomen of color (Shultz, 2005; Cooky et al., 2010).
- Sportswomen of color competing in the Olympic Games were more likely to experience racist and sexist microaggressions in the media compared to their White counterparts (Frisby, 2017). Sportswomen of color tend to be sidelined or rendered invisible in media coverage, often overshadowed by their White counterparts. In an analysis of the 1999 Women's World Cup win, Myer et al. (2015) writes on the lack of media attention U.S. goalie Brianna Scurry received after the U.S. win. Instead, media focus centered on Brandi Chastain and the other White sportswomen on the U.S. women's national team.
 - There are a number of factors to explain the above trends in the coverage of women's sports. Certainly, hegemonic masculinity embedded in sports and sports cultures, as well as sexism play a role (Fink, 2015a; Bruce, 2015).
 - In addition, scholars and women's sports advocates have suggested the lack of women in journalist, broadcaster, and commentator roles in sports media as well as the lack of women in decision-making positions or leadership positions within sports media may help to explain the continued dominance of coverage of men's sports (Cooky et al., 2015; Laucella et al., 2017).
 - The Institute of Diversity and Ethics in Sports produces a racial and gender "report card" on the hiring practices within sports organizations, including sports media. According to the latest report, the 75 newspaper and websites examined received an F for gender hiring practices. The report found 90% of sports editors, 69.9% of assistant sports editors, 83.4% of columnists, 88.5% of reporters, and 79.6% of copy editors/designers were men (and the vast majority, White men) (Lapchick et al., 2018).
 - Women were sharply underrepresented on the staffs of Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) member newspapers. In 2017, women made up 17.9% of sports staffs (Lapchick et al., 2018).
 - Yet, research has shown when sports editors commit to hiring women, they often find women thrive and move into leadership roles in the organization. Conversely, research indicates that an "add and stir" approach may not in fact shift the overall dearth of coverage of women's sports and that

placing the burden of covering women's sports may be detrimental for the advancement of women's careers in an industry whereby occupational status is achieved by covering the major sports, which in most cases are men's sports. In a 2005 survey of women who work in sports newspaper departments, over half of the respondents were not convinced that increasing the number of women journalists would increase the coverage of women's sports (Hardin & Shain, 2005).

- Simply hiring women may not sufficiently address the problem given that once women are hired, they often leave the industry in what's been termed a "revolving door" in sports journalism. This may be in part due to the working cultures of sports media outlets, which still tend to be masculine-identified (regardless of the numerical proportions of women and men employees) as well as the harassment women in sports media professions encounter (Antunovic, 2018).

Table 12: WSF Female Leaders in Sport Survey: Views on Steps to Take to Change Women's Sports Coverage for the Better

- 27% recommend that sport media outlets need to commit to covering women's sports.
- 17% believe that increasing the number of women working in sport media will have a positive effect on women's sport coverage.
- 24% believe that there is a need to change the culture in sport media organizations to one that values women's sports.
- 13% recommended changing the times when women's teams and female athletes play to times when they are more likely to be covered.
- 20% believed that there is simply not enough storytelling about women athletes, women's teams, and women's events.

From Staurowsky et al., 2020. Chasing Equity: The Triumphs, Challenges, and Opportunities in Sports for Girls and Women.



Erica Wheeler, Basketball, WSF Athlete Ambassador

Conclusion

When taken as a whole, there is no question that the landscape for girls and women in sport has dramatically changed from what it was in the 1970s when Title IX was passed. The evidence shows that there has been tremendous growth in participation opportunities and that the result of the expansion of opportunity has been an infrastructure to support U.S. women shining on the world stage in numerous sports. There are also more women working in sport than ever before in an array of roles that extend well beyond coaching and athletics administration. And we are in the midst of a shift in terms of the hiring of women in professional sport organizations that we have not seen before. As a consequence, there is much to be optimistic about.

Still, the quest for gender equity in U.S. sport remains, in large part, elusive. Girls and women continue to face barriers to sport participation. Spending on sport for girls and women at every level falls short. Women working in sport face an array of issues – from pay inequality to gender bias – that fuels the need for persistent and strategic efforts to foster gender inclusive climates and cultures within U.S. sport organizations. Girls and women from marginalized groups – girls and women of color, girls and women with disabilities, LGBTQ individuals, and immigrant girls and women – have fewer opportunities and encounter persistent hostile environments that are discouraging, dismissive, and dispiriting. And while the hope of sport serving as a haven for girls and women to thrive and grow in transformative ways is there for some, there is also the heartbreaking reality that girls and women are not safe in sport environments.

From a business perspective, the case for achieving gender equity sport systems in the United States can be found in some basic economic realities. Businesses are 15% more likely to have financial returns above the national industry medians if they are in the top quartile for gender diversity (Hunt, Layton, & Prince, 2014). In fact, female presence on boards leads to improved governance, and boards with at least three women score higher in applying corporate strategy, applying conflict of interest rules/ codes of conduct, and more generally, bringing a different voice to debates and decision making (Fondas & Sassalos, 2000; Geeraert et al., 2014; Zelechowski & Bilimoria, 2004). Key benefits offered through organizational inclusion of women include greater economic and social impact, 15% greater productivity, lower rates of turnover, increased creativity, broader market appeal, cultural competent communication, and global appeal.

For years, and now, we use Title IX and gender equity to make the moral argument for women's sport. To do so is right and just. This argument emanates from a deep understanding as to why women matter and what is at stake when girls and women are shortchanged.

The argument comes into even sharper focus, however, when we think in economic terms about the value of women and why women matter. In terms of women's economic value:

- Women control approximately \$20 trillion = 85% of consumer spending (Staurowsky, 2016);
- Women composed 47% of the U.S. civilian workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017);
- Women control 51% of the personal wealth in the U.S., an estimated \$29 trillion (Mack, 2019);
- Women influence 70% to 80% of all consumer purchasing (Brennan, 2015);
- Women are responsible for 48% of new car purchases (Joinwomendrivers.com, 2019);
- Women make 80% of travel decisions (Rodríguez, 2014);
- Women make 80% of the healthcare decisions (Stone, 2019);
- Women dominated the second running boom (Lough et al., 2016); and
- Women exceed men in the purchase of shoes, apparel, technology, services, and events (Harrolle & Klickliter, 2019).

The status of girls and women in sport in the United States should match that value.

At a human level, the arguments for gender equality for girls and women in sport are compelling. There is always a right time to be fair and just in our treatment of each other, whether in school, the boardroom, the halls of the U.S. Congress, in broadcast media, and on the athletic field. A sport system that fails in this regard fails the nation. When our daughters are strong and empowered citizens, equipped to take on the challenges of the world and make a difference that will last for generations to come, we all win.

Calls to Action

There is much that can be done to address the myriad issues identified in this report. Below are calls to action that can be taken up by athletes, citizens, coaches, change makers, game changers, members of the media, parents, public policy makers, and sport executives to increase and improve sport participation opportunities for girls and women; to break down barriers that prevent girls and women from participating fully in sport, especially girls and women from marginalized groups; to improve and enhance Title IX compliance at the high school and college levels; to address equal treatment in sport workplaces and continue to promote women in sport leadership roles; and to increase media coverage of women's sport.

Participation

1. Improve efforts to monitor youth, high school, college, and elite sport in the United States so that participation across all demographics can be systematically captured and evaluated.
2. Find new and creative ways to promote opportunities for girls to participate in a wide variety of sports, including non-traditional sport pathways, to encourage more adolescent girls to participate, regardless of their ability level or interest level in traditionally offered sport.
3. Increase the visibility of physically active and successful female role models for girls in sport. Embrace the power that positive mentors and role models have on participation through programming. Young girls seeing professional women athletes can increase aspirations in both participation and in professional sport careers. (Picariello & Waller, 2016)
4. Innovate and provide new opportunities for girls to participate in sport and physical activity at the high school level for broader and more sustained participation. Encourage girls to participate in multiple sports at the high school level to maximize health benefits and reduce injury and burn-out.
5. Develop opportunities for girls to participate in mixed-sex teams and work on policies to ensure positive participation environments to support girls and boys, and women and men, as they learn to play and compete together.
6. Encourage governing bodies to continuously evaluate state-by-state sport trends to understand their climate and provide opportunities for their specific population of sport participants to compete in high school and recreational sport.
7. Implement educational programs for young women on the lifelong benefits of participation in sport and physical activity, including decreased risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer.
8. Educate parents on the benefits of encouraging their daughters to participate in physical activity and sport. Encourage participation in sport at an early age to take full advantage of developmental factors associated with sport participation. Stress the importance of sport participation during the ages of and surrounding puberty, as girls' bodies, minds, and social support systems will likely shift during this time. Educate parents and caregivers about how they can support their daughters' sport participation.
9. Emphasize team building and inclusion when creating and strengthening girls' sport experiences while simultaneously remaining focused on the fitness benefits of sport. Organize activities with both fitness and sociability in mind in order to increase girls' motivation for participating in school sport specifically.
10. Expand research on the use of sport as a tool to combat depressive symptoms and psychological distress.
11. Educate girls on the synergy between sport participation and academic pursuits and how both can provide them opportunities in the future. Support girls' academic pursuits by teaching time management skills and supporting balanced relationships with both athletics and academics.
12. Develop more methods to help inform girls, coaches, teachers, and others about ways that they can get involved in sport not only as athletes but also as coaches, administrators, and executives, and in the full array of other roles they could play working in sport. Ensure that outreach is culturally and linguistically relevant and accessible.
13. Embrace the use of technology in sport through collaboration. As screen time continues to rise in importance of youth, it is important to find collaborative ways to incorporate the use of technology to drive sport and physical activity participation (Staiano et al., 2016).



Southern California Golf Association

Barriers

14. Fund, support, and implement research to identify the barriers to sports participation and physical activity across different communities and populations and how to overcome them. Once barriers and solutions are identified, establish programs to execute strategic solutions. This should include research that looks at multiple factors impacting sports participation and uses advanced research methods and data to better understand the systems involved.
15. Foster a supportive climate for girls from marginalized groups by creating a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment through policy and practice.
16. Provide youth coaches with tools and resources that maximize girls' participation and retention, and address girls' needs, challenges, motivations, and strengths. Integrate best practices that include: striking a balance between fun, skill development, and competition (winning); viewing mistakes as opportunities to learn and adjust; and providing good technical instruction for improvement. Move past simplistic masculinized ways of defining competitiveness (winning at all costs, external outcomes) to definitions of healthy competition that involve skill development, growth, and progression in individual players and their goals.
17. Prioritize coach background checks, qualifications, and education in youth sport organizations. For instance, U.S. Soccer offers both in-person and online youth coaching clinics (The Aspen Institute, 2018). Other sport organizations should follow the same formula, making education and training convenient for coaches to aid in completion.
18. Implement mandatory education and training of all coaches regarding emotional and physical abuse and appropriate motivation techniques. Enforce a zero-tolerance policy for coaches emotionally and/or physically abusing athletes. Include specific language in coaching contracts that prohibits abusive behaviors and that states any type of abuse is grounds for termination with cause.
19. Develop policies to protect athletes from sexual harassment and abuse. Create entry-level training and mentoring programs for novice coaches. Encourage parents to be present at the sporting experiences of their children and ensure they have access to all spaces where their child is participating. Coaches or athletic personnel should not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for athletes outside club programs and activities. Coaches and other athletic personnel should not be alone with athletes.
20. Educate athletes, coaches, and athletic personnel about the importance of mental health. Discuss the signs and symptoms of mental health disorders and where to find support. Conduct a pre-participation mental health screening every year to assess the athlete's mental health and well-being. Have clinical psychologists on call to help diagnose and support athletes who may be suffering from a mental health ailment. Destigmatize mental health disorders by inviting former athletes to speak about their challenges with mental health.
21. Implement prevention and early intervention strategies to monitor eating disorders. Utilize a yearly nutritional screen for eating disorders. Require coaches and athletic personnel to bring concerns about athletes' body weight/composition to the athletic trainer, dietitian or other designated staff. Avoid setting group weight goals. Do not share any athlete's weight or body composition publicly. If an eating disorder is suspected, the athlete must be required to meet with a nutritionist and/or the eating disorder management team if one is available.
22. Ensure effective protocols are in place to protect athletes from injury. Require pre-participation assessment or physical for all athletes. The doctor should be able to check for any underlying conditions that may be present that could be exacerbated by athletic participation. An athletic trainer or medical personnel must be present at all team activities. Provide accurate and concise information on injury reports of athletes. Ensure all athletes are in proper athletic apparel and equipment to reduce the risk of injury from faulty or lack of equipment. Once an athlete is medically cleared and allowed to return to play, a stepwise protocol should be followed to ease the athlete back into the sport. The athletic trainer or medical professional must continue to monitor the

athlete to ensure the symptoms or side effects of the injury do not return.

23. Increase education for coaches, athletic administrators, and athletes to understand the importance of concussion prevention and treatment. Require pre-participation assessment for all athletes to establish a baseline measurement. This will be used if a concussion is obtained to help decide when an athlete can return to their sport participation. Any player who suffers a hit to the head should be removed from competition for the duration of the event to assess for concussion symptoms. If the hit to the head occurs in practice, the athlete should not be allowed to return to practice for at least 24 hours. Require a healthcare professional to approve the athlete's return to play if a concussion has occurred. Once an athlete is medically cleared and allowed to return to play, a stepwise protocol should be followed to ease the athlete back into the sport. The athletic trainer or medical professional must continue to monitor the athlete to ensure the symptoms or side effects of the concussion do not return.

Title IX

24. Improve monitoring to ensure that all school districts, universities, and colleges that receive federal funding designate an employee to serve as Title IX coordinator. They must make the Title IX coordinator's identity and contact information easy to find by students, personnel, and members of the public. The OCR should continue to enforce the law's Title IX coordinator requirement through investigations, resolutions, and, where necessary, adjudication.



Meghan Duggan

25. Ensure that Title IX coordinators are trained in Title IX requirements and implementation strategies. State education agencies and state athletic associations should ensure that training is available and financially accessible to school district personnel serving in Title IX coordinator roles. While the best practice for most institutions is to structure the Title IX coordinator's position external to athletics, the Title IX coordinator should work closely with athletic department staff to ensure that athletics gender equity issues are not overlooked by an institution that is also addressing other challenging Title IX issues, such as sexual misconduct. It may be helpful for a Title IX coordinator to designate deputy coordinators or other Title IX liaisons within the athletic department to facilitate necessary trainings and to ensure effective communication and reporting. Institution-wide committees that monitor and support the institution's Title IX compliance should ensure that gender equity in athletics is included on the committee's agenda or else designate a specific athletics-related subcommittee to address that issue.
26. Develop a reporting system that requires schools to publicly disclose: a) which part of Title IX's three-part test for athletic participation they are using to comply, b) information regarding their history and continuing practice of program expansion, and c) the methods used to fully and effectively meet the needs and interests of qualified female athletes. Work towards high school public disclosure reports in every state to provide better data about what is happening at the high school level relative to the allocation of athletic opportunities and resources.
27. Empower athletic administrators, coaches and students to voice thoughts or concerns over equitable practices in athletics departments. Ensure in both policy and practice that student whistleblowers are protected from reprisal when they report actual or perceived violations of the law in good faith, in keeping with Title IX's prohibition on retaliation.
28. In order to motivate institutional compliance, the NCAA and other athletic associations should monitor Title IX compliance as a condition for membership, reviving its past practice of self-study and peer review. Similarly, state athletic associations and/or state education agencies should provide compliance oversight as well.
29. Advocate to ensure better reporting, transparency, monitoring, and enforcement. Examples:
 - Congress and the Department of Education to adjust the EADA and its regulations so that the data it requests on its form is more useful for assessing gender equity and to create an audit system to ensure accuracy of data in EADA reports

- EADA to allow for the public to access information about an institution’s athletics-related capital as well as operating expenses.
 - The Department of Education to establish an audit system to promote public confidence in EADA reports.
 - Congress to pass legislation extending similar EADA disclosure requirements to school districts, in order to promote transparency and enforcement of Title IX at the elementary and secondary level of education as well.
30. Reexamine Title IX regulations to assess their applicability to club sports, intramurals, and recreation programs.
 31. Urge sport governing bodies to consider adopting, as a standard of membership, meeting a gender equity standard or providing certification of Title IX compliance. Conduct Title IX athletic education seminars at media association events. Require sport organizations to have a Title IX or gender equity assessment by a third party every 3-5 years.

Women in Sport Leadership

32. The United States Olympic Committee and NGBs should act immediately to endorse the March 25, 2018, IOC Gender Equality Recommendations and produce analogous plans, timetables, and monitoring systems for their own organizations to achieve all recommendations.
33. Support professional sport league expansion to create more opportunities for women to participate in professional sport.
34. Review the gender composition of organizations in the private sector to identify areas of imbalance and implement practices to address them. Examine organizational structure, promotion practices, and organizational pay structure to assess gender equality and advancement opportunities. Evaluate organization norms, social practices and policies perpetuating the status quo with men holding positions of power. Revise policies contributing to organizational gender inequities.
35. Reduce gender bias and discrimination in the workplace with deliberate strategies to address each. Evaluate role definitions and position descriptions to identify gender markers and identifiers. Expand role definitions and position descriptions to eliminate gender bias. Evaluate promotion practices to identify attributes more commonly aligned with one gender. Create hiring committees with diverse representation.
36. Establish an institutional task force at the collegiate level that brings together representatives of athletics and academics to identify and implement



Laila Ali, WSF Past President with 13-year-old Khouri

interdisciplinary, institutional solutions to gender bias. Institutionalize lines of communication and oversight of athletics.

37. Evaluate hiring practices at the collegiate level to ensure equitable opportunities for women. Recruit gender diverse pools of applicants for open positions developed by administrators and search committee members who are diverse themselves, knowledgeable in recognizing the subtleties of discrimination, and committed to overcoming it. Standardize human resources policies and procedures to ensure neutral outcomes with regard to gender, race/ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQ status. Educate hiring committee members on inclusive practices and overcoming implicit bias.
38. Identify targets of opportunity such as hiring a woman when a man retires. Replace women coaches who leave with a woman coach when possible. Use a version of the NFL’s Rooney Rule – interview at least one woman for each open position. Publicize positive metrics and changes such as achieving an A grade on a gender report card or hiring a woman coach or administrator. Review and audit practices such as bonus structure and salary negotiation processes to eliminate gender-biased recruitment and retention strategies. Implement tracking mechanisms and monitor progress on a regular basis. Ensure accountability with incentives and consequences tied to funding for missed metrics.
39. Partner with college and university programs that have diverse student enrollment to recruit diverse graduates into internship and entry-level positions. Factor diversity into all strategic decisions, including fundraising, marketing, management, and administration.



Girls in the Game

40. Identify barriers to and opportunities for career advancement for women in sport. Create mentoring programs that build in opportunities for women to learn from seasoned professionals and grow through mastering new challenges. Identify male allies who have the power to help women advance and change the status quo. Financially support professional development opportunities for women. Identify policies impacting parents and those who have caretaker responsibilities. Generate new ideas to create a workplace supportive of families and employee well-being. Eliminate practices of reliance on networks that limit inclusion of women and diverse colleagues. Create career plans with employees to achieve metrics for consistent growth and advancement opportunities.

Media Coverage

41. Commit to consistent media coverage of women's sports. While covering women's sports during sports mega-events is important, to build and sustain audiences and fan bases, sports media need to cover women's sports on an everyday basis. This allows readers and fans to build anticipation, understand strategies, and know players and teams. Focusing on lesser-known stories and backstories helps build and sustain a loyal fan base. (Adapted from Springer, 2019)
42. Deliver knowledgeable coverage: The more knowledgeable those in sports media are, the more information they will convey to readers/ viewers/ consumers. This will enhance the knowledge of audiences and fans, which will in turn create more interest in women's sports coverage. As it is, audiences need to invest more time, energy, and effort to find the detailed information that is readily accessible in men's sports content. (Adapted from Springer, 2019)
43. Improve the quality of women's sports coverage to mirror the coverage of men's sports. This requires moving beyond conventional narratives of female athletes and delving into complex understandings and nuanced narratives that reject gender stereotypes and roles (e.g., female athlete as "girl next door," mother balancing work and child-rearing, or object of men's sexual desire). Frame ideas and questions as athlete-driven, rather than gender-driven, in order to avoid some of the issues that often plague women's sports coverage, like femininity, attractiveness, and biology. (Adapted from Springer, 2019)
44. Present a roughly equitable quantity of coverage of women's sports. Defining "equity" in this context would account for the fact that there are still more men's sports—especially big-time college and professional spectator sports—than equivalent women's sports. Thus, efforts should be made to expand what constitutes sports beyond the "men's big three." (Adapted from Cooky et al., 2015)
45. Present women's sports stories in ways roughly equivalent in quality with the typical presentation of men's sports. This refers, of course, both to the technical quality—deploying ample game footage, graphics, music, and interviews to accompany a story—and to the quality of the sports anchor's verbal presentation, including amplifying the enthusiasm in reporting women's sports to a level on the excitement meter that is equivalent with the usual presentation of men's sports. (Adapted from Cooky et al., 2015)
46. Hire, develop and retain more women in sports media. Hire and retain on-camera sports anchors that are capable and willing to commit to gender-equitable quality and quantity of coverage. Sports media need to open the occupation to more women. Perhaps just as important, hiring and retention decisions should prioritize anchors and analysts—women and men—who are knowledgeable about and love women's sports. It is unlikely that one can easily or effectively fake the sort of enthusiasm today's male commentators routinely show for men's sports and male athletes' accomplishments. (Adapted from Cooky et al., 2015)

Appendix: Female Leaders in Sport Survey

Default Question Block

What is your age?

- 30 and younger
- 31-40 years of age
- 41-50 years of age
- 51-60 years of age
- 61 and older

What is your race or ethnicity? (Select all that apply.)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African-American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Mixed race
- Other
- I prefer not to respond

Select the region of the United States where you currently work.

- Northeast
- Midwest
- South
- West

Select the state you work in.

(pull-down list of states)

What term best describes your current primary professional role related to girls' and women's sports in the U.S.? (check all that apply)

- Academic (professor/faculty member/researcher)
- Assistant/Associate Coach
- Head Coach
- Board Member
- Journalist/Media/Social Media
- Director/Manager/Assistant-Associate Level Administrator

- Executive/President/Owner/Senior Level Administrator
- Sports Medicine Professional/Athletic Trainer
- Other

In your primary professional role, what level of U.S. sport do you work in? (Select all that apply.)

- Youth
- High School
- College
- Elite Amateur/Olympics
- Professional
- City Leagues/Recreational Leagues
- Other

How long have you been working/volunteering in girls' and women's sports at any level?

- less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-20 years
- more than 20 years

Have you ever been a competitive athlete? (Select all that apply.)

- No experience
- Local non-school travel team
- High school varsity
- College varsity - athletic scholarship
- College varsity - no athletic scholarship
- College club
- Elite amateur/Olympic level (regional and/or national team)
- Professional level
- Other

Barriers & Opportunities Section

Assess the degree of negative impact the following factors have in hindering or limiting girls' participation in sport. (Scale - very negative impact to no impact)

- Limited # of sports programs in community/school
- Difficulty with transportation
- Participation fees/financial obstacles (high school or younger)
- Sedentary behaviors (i.e., screen time)
- Competing academic demands on time
- Competing non-sport interests demands on time
- Competing family obligations
- Lack of media coverage of women's sports
- Poor quality media coverage of women's sports
- Lack of exposure to female coaches as role models
- Lack of exposure to female athletes as role models
- Lack of encouragement (from one or both parents, step-parent, and/or guardian)
- Lack of encouragement from peers
- Concerns about sport injuries
- Concerns about sexual abuse
- Male verbal abuse, harassment, bullying
- Concern about social acceptance (gender norms) playing sports
- Lack of Title IX enforcement

How have these operational and financial factors that impact girls' participation in sport changed over the past 10 years? (Scale - gotten much better to gotten much worse)

- Access to the opportunity to play
- Availability of financial support for programs
- Parent ability to afford participation fees
- Access to transportation to and from practices and games
- Access to quality facilities/resources
- Equal treatment (equipment, uniforms, supplies, team travel, etc.)
- Quantity of media coverage of women's sports
- Quality of media coverage of women's sports

How have these behavioral and social factors that impact girls' participation in sport changed over the past 10 years? (Scale - Gotten much worse to gotten much better)

- Engagement in sedentary behaviors (e.g. screen time)
- Competing demands on time (academics)
- Competing demands for time (family obligations)
- Competing demands (other interests, other extracurriculars)
- Exposure to female coaches as role models
- Exposure to female athletes as role models
- Encouragement from parents
- Encouragement from peers
- Concerns about safety (e.g. injury)
- Concerns about safety (sexual abuse)
- Girls' knowledge of how to get involved
- Societal acceptance of women and girls in sport

How has Title IX enforcement at the high school level changed over the past 10 years?

- Gotten much better
- Gotten better
- Remains largely the same (neither better nor worse)
- Gotten worse
- Gotten much worse
- Don't know

How has Title IX enforcement at the college level changed over the past 10 years?

- Gotten much better
- Gotten better
- Remains largely the same (neither better nor worse)
- Gotten worse
- Gotten much worse
- Don't know

Rate the degree of change in access to sport participation opportunities over the past 10 years for girls from these marginalized groups. (Scale - Gotten much worse to gotten much better)

- For immigrant girls
- For girls of color
- For girls with disabilities
- For LGBTQ girls
- For gender non-conforming girls

Rate the degree to which the climate within sport environments has changed for marginalized girls from these groups over the past 10 years. (Scale - gotten much worse to gotten much better)

- For immigrant girls
- For girls of color
- For girls with disabilities
- For LGBTQ girls
- For gender non-conforming girls

Rate the degree to which non-school based programs are run gender equitably? (5 point scale - very equitable to very unequitable)

- Youth Sport Programs
- Adult Sport Programs
- Elite Amateur Programs
- Olympic level (regional and/or national team)
- Professional level

Rate the degree to which high schools comply with Title IX in the area of athletics. (5 point scale - very strong record of compliance to very weak record of compliance)

Rate the degree to which colleges comply with Title IX in the area of athletics. (5 point scale - very strong record of compliance to very weak record of compliance)

Rank the steps below that you believe are most critical to the enforcement of Title IX or equal treatment policies from one to 10, with one being the most critical and 10 being the least critical. Type the number of your ranking in the text box to the left.

- Make Title IX compliance or gender equity standard a condition of membership in governance associations
- Require sport organizations to have a Title IX or gender equity assessment by third-party every 3-5 years
- Title IX compliance or gender equity standard as a condition for eligibility for post-season play
- Require ongoing and regular Title IX compliance training in athletic departments that includes all stakeholders
- Institutionally monitor Title IX and/or gender equity through established internal committee
- Urge that federal funding be withdrawn from athletic departments that are chronically Title IX non-compliant
- Create an audit system to assure accuracy that data in EADA reports is accurate

- Conduct Title IX athletic education seminars at media association events
- Work towards high school public disclosure reports in every state
- Ensure that schools appoint a Title IX coordinator

Identify the top three things that would have the greatest impact on increasing the quantity and/or quality of media coverage for women's sports.

- Increasing the number of women working in sport media
- Scheduling women's competitions at times when media are more likely to cover them
- Making a commitment to consistently cover women's sports
- Providing backstories on female athletes, women's sport in general, women's sport events, teams, and leagues
- Changing the culture within sports departments to value women's sports

Perceptions of Women in Sports Leadership - Barriers & Challenges

Assess the impact these hiring and evaluation policies have in hindering or limiting women's access to leadership positions in sport? (4 point scale - strong negative to no impact)

- Gender wage gap
- Gender stereotypical hiring perceptions (women are better at academic advising; men are better coaches)
- Gender bias regarding women with family obligations
- Lack of institutional protections and support for women in leadership positions
- Hiring of candidates in violation of non-discriminatory employment processes
- Different hiring strategies for women's sport positions (paper hires for women; aggressive marketplace searches for men)
- Different hiring strategies for female and male job candidates (e.g., hiring the weakest and cheapest female job candidate)
- Use of different review standards in the evaluation of male and female coaches (e.g., greater tolerance for aggressive and confrontational coaching styles among male than female coaches)
- Use of student or subordinate feedback in the evaluation of female but not male employees

Assess the impact these professional development factors have in hindering or limiting women's access to leadership positions in sport. (4 point scale - strong negative impact to no impact)

- Lack of training/education at the entry level of sports professions (e.g., Coaching Ed. Programs)
- Lack of professional development opportunities on the job
- Lack of professional leadership training programs
- Lack of access to mentors
- Lack of formal mentoring programs
- Lack of effective female professional networks
- Lack of female role models in leadership positions
- Fewer opportunities for advancement

Assess the impact these work climate factors have in hindering or limiting women's access to leadership positions in sport. (4 point scale - strong negative to no impact)

- Sport workplace culture that requires conformity to sex stereotypical behaviors
- Perceptions that women are less competent than men
- Homophobia
- Transphobia
- Racism
- Anti-semitism
- Religious bias
- Ageism
- Prejudice against individuals with disabilities

How has the situation for women in sports leadership changed from 10 years ago? (5 point scale - gotten much worse to gotten much better)

- Gender wage gap
- Gender stereotypical hiring perceptions (women are better at academic advising; men are better coaches)
- Gender bias regarding women with family obligations
- Lack of institutional protections and support for women in leadership positions
- Hiring of candidates in violation of non-discriminatory employment processes
- Different hiring strategies for women's sport positions (paper hires for women; aggressive marketplace searches for men)
- Different hiring strategies for female and male job candidates (e.g., hiring the weakest and cheapest female job candidate)

- Use of different review standards in the evaluation of male and female coaches (e.g., greater tolerance for aggressive and confrontational coaching styles among male than female coaches)
- Use of student or subordinate feedback in the evaluation of female but not male employees

How has access to professional development opportunities, training, and education changed for women sport leaders over the past 10 years? (5 point scale - gotten much worse to gotten much better)

- Training/education at the entry level of sports professions (e.g., Coaching Ed. Programs)
- Professional development opportunities on the job
- Access to professional leadership training programs
- Access to mentors
- Access to formal mentoring programs
- Effective female professional networks
- Female role models in leadership positions
- Opportunities for advancement

How have factors that affect work climate for women sport leaderships changed in the past 10 years within sport organizations? (5 point scale - gotten much worse to gotten much better)

- Culture that requires conformity to sex stereotypical behaviors
- Perceptions that women are less competent than men
- Homophobia
- Transphobia
- Racism
- Anti-semitism
- Religious bias
- Homophobia
- Ageism
- Prejudice against individuals with disabilities

As a woman leader in sport, rate your level of confidence on the following: (5 point scale - very confident to very unconfident)

- Seeking a mentor
- Asking for access to leadership above your rank
- Pursuing a job opportunity beyond your experience
- Developing a career path plan
- Requesting a new role or position

Does your institution/organization/governing body manage women and men in the same ways with regard to employment issues (e.g., salary commensurate with success and experience, opportunity to receive multiyear contracts)?

- Yes, men and women are managed in the same ways
- No, women are favored over men
- No, men are favored over women
- I don't know
- Not applicable. My position is volunteer.

Have you ever been discriminated against in your workplace as a result of your gender?

- Yes
- No

If you checked "yes" in the above question, how would you describe the consequences that discrimination had on your career?

- large negative consequence
- negative consequence
- neither negative nor positive consequence
- positive consequence
- large positive consequence

Please check "yes" or "no" or "don't know" to the following statements. Check one response.

- Has your gender prevented you from receiving a promotion?
- I am paid less for doing the same job that men do at my institution.
- I did not get a sports job due to my gender.
- My performance is evaluated differently because of my gender.

Are girls'/women's sports and boys'/men's sports treated equitably by your institution/organization/sport governing body?

- boys'/men's and girls/women's sports receive equitable treatment
- girls//women's sports receive better treatment than boys'/men's sports
- boys'/men's sports receive better treatment than girls'/women's sports
- Not applicable

Solutions & Policy Recommendations

Please list a few specific solutions to increase the participation levels of girls and women in sport. Please be as specific as you can with respect to who could implement and where resources could come from.

Please list a few specific solutions to advance women into sport leadership positions and to advance women farther in their careers as women leaders in sport.

Do you have any final thoughts you want to share about girls and women in sport and their opportunities for participation and leadership?

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