



GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT

BELGIUM



FACTSHEET



TOTAL POPULATION

11.7 MILLION

MEDIAN AGE

41.7 YEARS



GDP PER CAPITA

€42,525

POPULATION

51%

WOMEN

MEN

49%

LIFE EXPECTANCY

84.4 YEARS

WOMEN

MEN

80.1 YEARS

Sources: Eurostat (2023)

ALL IN PLUS: PROMOTING GREATER GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT

The following is a breakdown of six gender equality indicators for sport in Belgium:

1. Gender equality in leadership
2. Gender equality in coaching and officiating
3. Gender equality in participation (from grassroots to elite sport)
4. Preventing gender-based violence in sport
5. Gender equality in media/communication
6. Policies and programmes to address gender equality in sport

The results are based on 45 respondents from Belgium – 31 sport federations from Belgium Flanders, 10 federations from Belgium Wallonia, the Belgian Olympic Committee, the Belgian Paralympic Committee. The two national agencies include the General Sports Administration, and Sport Vlaanderen. Data was collated between May and September 2024 on the basis of 2023 data. The data presented is based on responses to the relevant questions, including those who selected 'don't know' or did not provide a specific answer. As a result, percentages may not always total 100%.

The data in this factsheet is from **"All In Plus: Promoting greater gender equality in sport"**, a European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE) joint project. The overarching goal of **"All In Plus"** is to highlight the benefits of greater gender equality in sport. The key objectives are to ensure that the relative invisibility of women in sport and the ongoing lack of awareness about gender imbalance in sport and related issues are brought clearly to the forefront.

The project covers and standardises data collection in 20 countries and Kosovo,* based on a set of commonly agreed "basic" gender equality indicators in six strategic fields: **leadership; coaching and officiating; participation; gender-based violence; media/communication; gender equality policies and programmes.**

- To find more results for Belgium and the other countries involved in the project have a look at the project website: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/gender-equality-in-sport/home>

* All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

All In Plus: Promoting greater gender equality in sport

Co-funded
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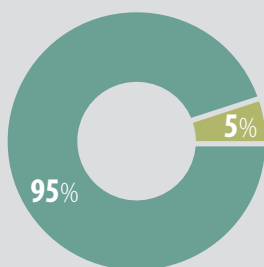
COUNCIL OF EUROPE



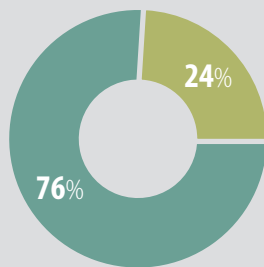
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GENDER EQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP

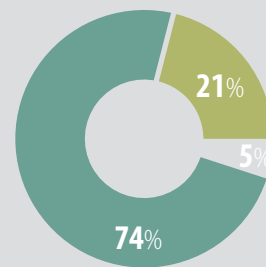
1 FEMALE AND MALE PRESIDENTS OF SPORT FEDERATIONS AND OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEES (n=43)



2 FEMALE AND MALE VICE-PRESIDENTS OF SPORT FEDERATIONS AND OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEES (n=43)



3 FEMALE AND MALE EXECUTIVE HEADS OF SPORT FEDERATIONS AND OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEES (n=43)

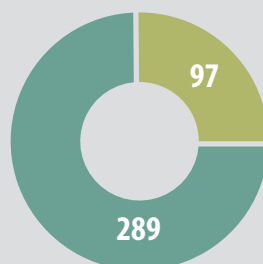


n=x refers to the number of respondents (i.e. sport federations, Olympic and Paralympic Committees, and national authorities responsible for sport) that replied to the question. **N=x** refers to the number of persons in a specific role (vice-presidents, board members, etc.)

- ▶ Only two (5%) sports federations have a female president – the gymnastics and rowing federations from Wallonia-Brussels.
- ▶ Among the 50 vice-presidents of the 43 respondents, 24% (N=12) are women, eight (67%) of whom are involved in the sport federations in the Flemish Community and four (33%) in the French Community **2**.
- ▶ One federation has the same number of female and male vice-presidents (N=1). This is the triathlon (FL) federation.
- ▶ In sport federations, 22% of executive heads (N=9) are women; four sports federations in Flanders (equestrian, gymnastics, rowing and rugby) amounting to 13%, and five in Wallonia-Brussels (golf, gymnastics, judo, sailing and weightlifting) amounting to 50%.
- ▶ If we consider only Olympic and Paralympic sport federations, the rate of female executive heads is 22% (N=9); four sports federations in Flanders (equestrian, gymnastics, rowing and rugby) amounting to 13% and five in Wallonia-Brussels (golf, gymnastics, judo, sailing and weightlifting) amounting to 50%.
- ▶ Among the 28 respondents that answered the question, there were 1,302 voting members of the (general) assembly in 2023 – 25.5% of whom were women (N=332).
- ▶ There were four women and 15 men in managerial positions in the two agencies for sport in Belgium.

- ▶ **THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC COMMITTEES** are both chaired by male presidents.
- ▶ **THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE** has two vice-presidents, a man and a woman.
- ▶ **THE PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE** has one vice-president, a woman.
- ▶ The two Committees combined have 23 board members, of whom eight are women and 15 are men. Four women chair sports commissions/committees compared to 12 men.

4 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC SPORT FEDERATION AND COMMITTEE BOARD MEMBERS COMPRISE 97 WOMEN AND 289 MEN (N=386)



There is a low representation of female board members among sports federations and the Olympic & Paralympic Committees in Belgium, reaching 25% **4**.

The rowing (FL) federation reported a slightly higher representation of women (N=6) compared to men (N=5).

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING: ACTIONS & MEASURES

67% (n=30) of 45 respondents have implemented measures to recruit or increase the number of women in elected/appointed decision-making positions in sport.

These include: in Flanders, 19 federations as well as the Olympic Committee and Sport Vlaanderen (64%) and in Wallonia-Brussels, seven federations, the Paralympic Committee and the General Sports Administration (75%).

- ▶ **47%** (n=14) have transparent, clear and gender friendly election/appointment procedures.
- ▶ **43%** (n=13) include gender equal representation in decision-making in their statutes.

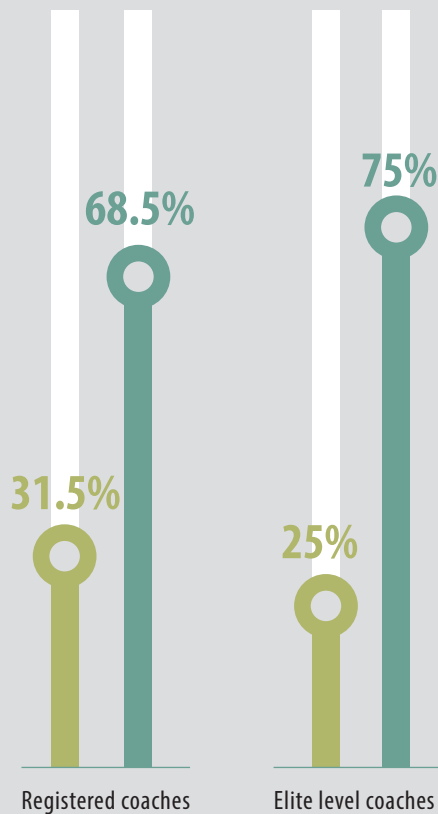
- ▶ **37%** (n=11) have gender quotas/targets in elections or appointment procedures and have organised awareness-raising campaigns to encourage women to stand for decision-making positions.
- ▶ **23%** (n=7) have developed an action plan to increase the number of women in decision-making positions.
- ▶ **20%** (n=6) have reserved seats for women.
- ▶ **17%** (n=5) initiated and/or supported research/studies on gender equality in decision-making positions.
- ▶ **10%** (n=3) have organised education/training courses on leadership for women only as well as gender equality training for decision-makers.

GENDER EQUALITY IN COACHING

There are **12,921 women (31.5%)** and **28,105 men (68.5%)** among registered coaches, trainers and instructors in Belgium.

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FEMALE AND MALE REGISTERED COACHES AND EMPLOYED ELITE LEVEL COACHES IN THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC SPORT FEDERATIONS (%)



ALL REGISTERED COACHES

Women are underrepresented among coaches in Belgium at 31.5% **5**.

Federations in Flanders with the highest percentage of female coaches:

- Gymnastics 82%, equestrian 76% and golf 67%.

Federations in Flanders with the highest percentage of male coaches (90-100%):

- Shooting 96%, football 95%, skiing 93% and boxing 91%.

Federations in Wallonia-Brussels with the highest percentage of female coaches:

- Sailing 100%, golf 90% and rowing 61%.

Federations in Wallonia-Brussels with the highest percentage of male coaches:

- Tennis 100%, judo 70% and gymnastics 67%.

ELITE LEVEL COACHES

- **74 women (25%)** and **217 men (75%)** coach elite level athletes or national teams **5**.

- **24%** (n=10) of the federations, eight in Flanders and two in Wallonia-Brussels, do not employ a female elite level coach.

- **58.5%** (n=24) of the federations employ at least one female elite level coach.

- **73%** (n=30) of the federations employ at least one male elite level coach.

WOMEN IN COACHING: ACTIONS & MEASURES

29% (n=13) of the respondents, including 12 sport federations from Flanders and Sport Vlaanderen, have taken measures to recruit or increase the number of women coaches since 2020.

29% (n=12) of the federations surveyed (10 in Flanders and two in Wallonia-Brussels) have offered their coaches training courses on the topic of gender equality in sport.

51% (n=21) have offered training pertaining to gender-based violence in sport.

These are the most to least commonly used measures:

- Awareness-raising campaigns targeting women (69%, n=9).
- Transparent, clear and gender-sensitive recruitment procedures (46%, n=6).
- Mentoring programme for (future) female coaches, offering education/training courses for female coaches and a written action plan/strategy to increase the number of women in coaching (38.5%, n=5).
- Setting up a network of female coaches, establishing a database of female coaches, as well as initiated and/or supported research/studies on gender equality in coaching (31%, n=4).
- Reserved positions for female coaches in education/training courses (15%, n=2).
- Dedicated resources for female coaches (8%, n=1).

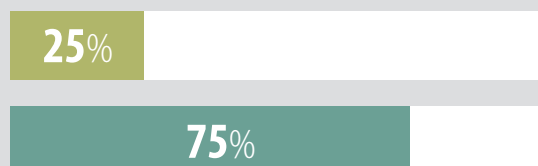
GENDER EQUALITY IN OFFICIATING

SPORTS OFFICIALS

There are **4,439 women (36%)**, **7,814 men (64%)** and **one person of non-disclosed gender (0.01%)** among registered referees, judges, umpires, race commissioners etc. supervising compliance with rules during sporting events in Belgium **7**.

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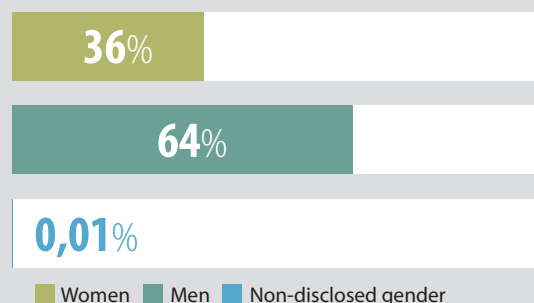
WOMEN AND MEN OFFICIATING IN ELITE LEVEL COMPETITIONS



There were 76 women officiating in elite level competitions in 2023, of whom 35 (46%) officiated games where men were competing. In contrast, there were 224 men officiating in elite level competitions, of whom four (2%) officiated games where women were competing. In other words, of the total 300 sports officials who officiate elite games, 25% were women and 75% were men.

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REGISTERED REFEREES, JUDGES, UMPIRES, RACE COMMISSIONERS ETC.



- ▶ In the Tokyo Olympic Games (2020) as well as Tokyo Paralympic Games (2020), 13 Belgian sports officials officiated – three women and 10 men.
- ▶ In the Beijing Olympic Games (2022), three Belgian sports officials officiated – two women and one man.

Since 2020, out of the 13 federations (**32%**) which reported implementing measures to recruit or increase the number of female sports officials:

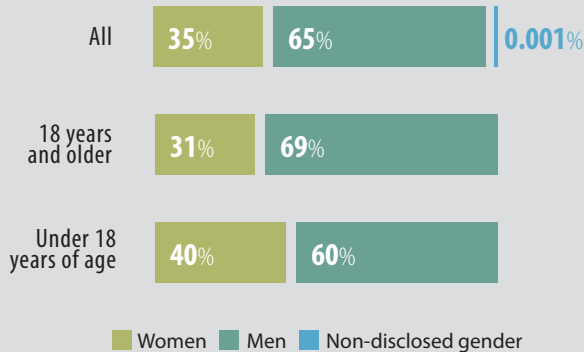
- ▶ **69%** (n=9) have implemented awareness-raising campaigns targeting women.
- ▶ **54%** (n=7) report having a written action plan to increase the number of female sports officials.
- ▶ **46%** (n=6) have adopted transparent, clear and gender-sensitive recruitment procedures.
- ▶ **31%** (n=4) report offering education/training courses and have established a database of female sports officials.
- ▶ **15%** (n=2) have reserved positions for women sports officials in education/training courses and established a network of female sports officials.
- ▶ **8%** (n=1) have established a mentoring programme for (future) female sports officials.

24% (n=10) of the federations have reported offering their sports officials training courses on the topic of gender equality in sport.

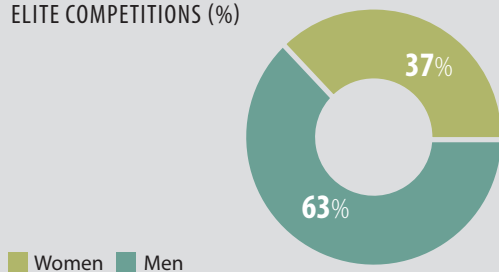
39% (n=16) have offered training pertaining to gender-based violence in sport.

GENDER EQUALITY IN PARTICIPATION

8 MEMBERSHIP OF THE OLYMPIC AND/OR PARALYMPIC SPORT FEDERATIONS (%)



9 ATHLETES PARTICIPATING IN ELITE COMPETITIONS (%)



- ▶ 41 federations² reported 188,831 girls as members of their sport clubs – this number accounts for 40% of young people who are members of sports clubs out of 476,089 members [8](#).
- ▶ Boys account for 287,253 (60%) of young people who are members of sports clubs [8](#).
- ▶ There are more girls active in sport clubs/federations with 188,831 members (53%) compared to 164,774 women (47%).
- ▶ Men represent the majority of male members of sports federations at 370,944 (56%).
- ▶ In the adult category, women's participation reaches 31% compared to 69% men [8](#).
- ▶ When we count all members from all categories, men represent the highest percentage with 37% over boys (28%), girls (19%), women (16%), as well as adults and youth of other/non-disclosed gender (0.001%).
- ▶ In the Flemish community, the sports with the highest proportion of women compared to men are figure skating (86%) and equestrian (82%). Football (91%) and shooting (89%) have the most male members, followed by table tennis (86%). The hockey federation is more gender balanced with 3% difference between female and male members.
- ▶ In the French community, the sports with the highest proportion of women compared to men is gymnastics (83.5%). Judo (74%) has the most male members followed by tennis and golf (both 69%). The rowing federation is more gender balanced with 11% difference between female and male members.
- ▶ There are 911 women (37%) and 1,576 men (63%) participating in elite competitions [9](#).

GIRLS AND WOMEN IN SPORT: ACTIONS & MEASURES

56% (n=25) of the respondents, including 22 sport federations, the two community level agencies, and the Paralympic Committee, have taken action to promote women and girls' access to participation in sport and/or physical activity since 2020.

These federations include badminton (FL), basketball (FL), boxing (FL), cycling (FL), football (FL), golf (both), handball (FL), hockey (FL), judo (both), rugby (FL), sailing (FL), shooting (FL), skating (FL), table tennis (FL), tennis (WB), triathlon (FL), weightlifting (both), disabled sport (FL) and the Flemish Sports federation.

- ▶ **80%** (n=20) have organised awareness-raising campaigns targeting girls and women.

- ▶ **56%** (n=14) have a written action plan/strategy to increase the number of active girls and women in sport.
- ▶ **52%** (n=13) offered taster sessions for women and girls only.
- ▶ **44%** (n=11) allocate financial resources to girls' and women's sport and/or physical activities.
- ▶ **32%** (n=8) offered training for coaches and/or for decision-makers on this topic.
- ▶ **28%** (n=7) offer equal access to sport facilities for girls/ women and other individuals and have changed the competition offers to be more tailored to girls and women.
- ▶ **24%** (n=6) initiated and/or supported research/studies on gender equality in participation.
- ▶ **20%** (n=5) have changed the provision of sport by introducing new sports, activities or ways of practising them.

² 31 federations from Flanders and 10 from Wallonia-Brussels that responded to the questionnaire. Given the large differences in sports participation rates among federations in Flanders (86%) compared to Wallonia-Brussels (14%), as well as the higher response rate from organisations in Flanders, the overall percentages for Belgium with regard to sports participation reflect the situation in Flanders rather than Wallonia-Brussels.

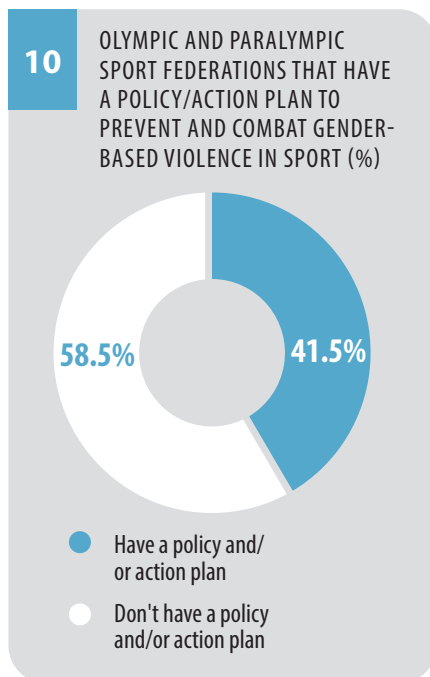
FEMALE ELITE LEVEL ATHLETES: ACTIONS & MEASURES

Since 2020, **29%** (n=13) of respondents have taken action to allocate resources equally among women and men. These are the athletics (FL), boxing (FL), skating (FL), football (FL), hockey (FL), judo (FL), rugby (FL), skiing (FL) and taekwondo (FL) federations, as well as the two community level agencies for sport, and the Olympic and Paralympic Committees.

- ▶ **Sport Vlaanderen (FL)** provides additional subsidies for organisers of elite sports events implementing specific measures to promote (more) women's participation.
- ▶ The **General Sports Administration (WB)** reports the adoption of a 60:40 gender quota (of either gender) for the balanced distribution of top-level athletes leading to an increase in the number of contracts allocated to top-level sportswomen.



PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SPORT



40% (n=18) of respondents, including 16 sports federations from Flanders and one from Wallonia-Brussels, as well as Sport Vlaanderen (FL), have adopted a written policy and/or action plan for preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport.

Most respondents (n=8) adopted their policy/action plan between 2020-2021. The gymnastics federation (FL) was the first to put its policy in place in 2000 and the most recent are the archery, rowing, and shooting federations in 2024, all from Flanders. For the majority of the federations (n=14) the policy is associated with the national mechanisms on prevention of gender-based violence in sport.

Among those that have a policy and/or action plan:

- ▶ **83%** (n=15) have human resources dedicated to its implementation.
- ▶ **89%** (n=16) have a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in place.
- ▶ **39%** (n=7) have funds allocated to its implementation.

PREVENTING AND COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: ACTIONS & MEASURES

56% (n=25) of all respondents have implemented specific actions/measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport in Belgium.

At community level, 70% of respondents from Flanders and 17% from Wallonia-Brussels have implemented such actions.

The actions taken most often to prevent and combat gender-based violence include:

- ▶ Codes of conduct/ethical guidelines for coaches and/or people in managerial and decision-making positions (84%, n=21)
- ▶ Appointment of a welfare or a protection officer (68%, n=17)
- ▶ Provision of formal complaint procedure for reporting gender-based violence (60%, n=15)
- ▶ Mention in the organisation's statutes forbidding gender-based violence (56%, n=14)

- ▶ Guidelines for handling cases of gender-based violence, training seminars for coaches and/or for decision-makers and provision of support services for affiliated organisations (52%, n=13)
- ▶ Minimising risks procedures (criminal record checks, risk assessment procedure, etc.), a written action plan to prevent and combat gender-based violence in sport, and awareness-raising campaigns on this topic (48%, n=12).
- ▶ Provision of support services for victims/survivors (44%, n=11)
- ▶ Training seminars for athletes and the establishment of a helpline (40%, n=10)
- ▶ Initiation and/or support of research/studies on gender-based violence in sport (24%, n=6)
- ▶ Rehabilitation measures for perpetrators (16%, n=4)
- ▶ Provision of safe venues (lighting, separate locker rooms, etc.) (8%, n=2).

GENDER EQUALITY IN MEDIA/COMMUNICATION

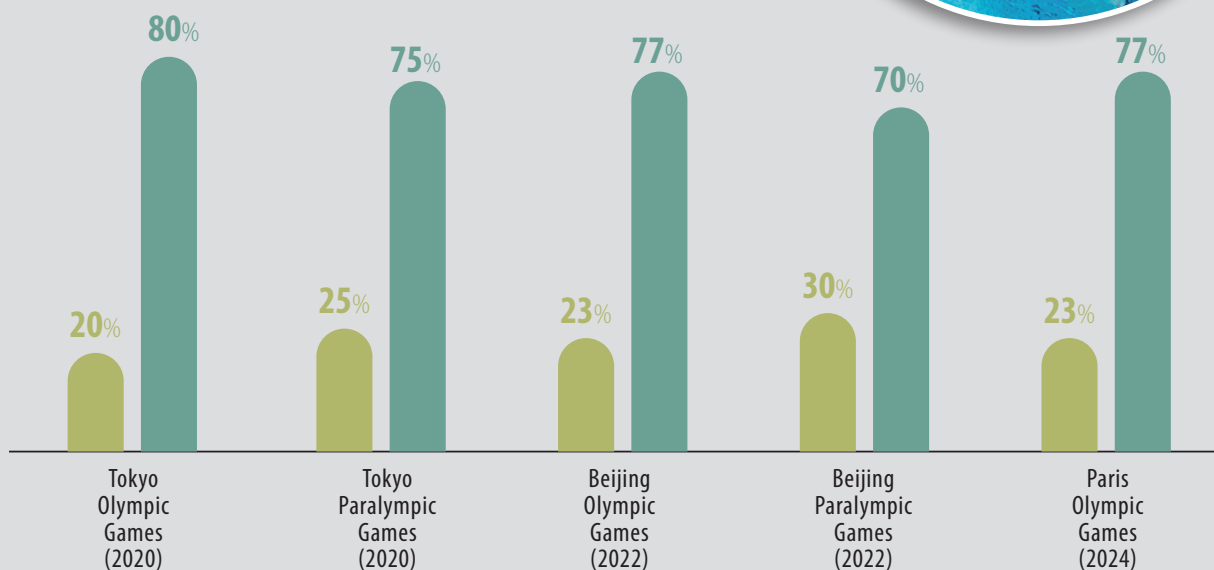


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PRESS ACCREDITATIONS AT THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES (%) ALL REPRESENTED COUNTRIES

(Source: IOC & IPC)

Women Men



In 2022-2023, the International Sports Press Association (AIPS) issued **1** membership for women and **73** for men in Belgium.

Since 2020, **24%** (n=11) of the respondents have targeted the media (public and/or private) for a gender-balanced representation of those practising sport.

27% (n=12) have focused on social media for a gender-balanced representation of athletes.

29% (n=13) have guidelines for gender-balanced representation in communication materials (texts, pictures, etc.).

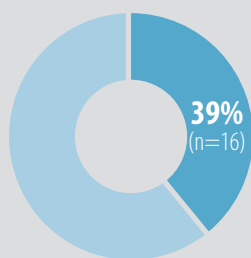
Regarding media coverage, the **G-Sport Vlaanderen federation** highlights that gender balance and diversity are an integral part of the federation's external communication plan.

The **Paralympic Committee** reports that its media campaigns and specific actions with the media are gender-balanced as well as diverse, showcasing female and male athletes with a variety of disabilities.

GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

12

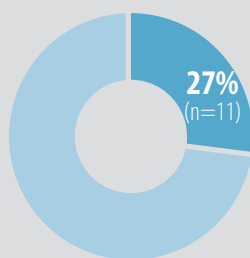
GENDER EQUALITY INCLUDED IN LONG-TERM PLAN OR BUSINESS PLAN



Athletics (FL), badminton (FL), boxing (FL), cycling (FL), football (FL), golf (both), gymnastics (WB), handball (FL), hockey (FL), judo (WB), rugby (FL), skating (FL), triathlon (FL), weightlifting (WB) and the Flemish Sports Federation

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SPECIFIC WRITTEN POLICY FOR ADVANCING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN SPORT

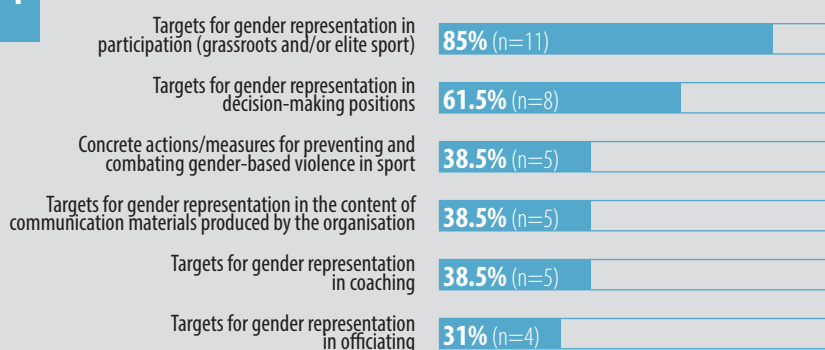


Badminton (FL), boxing (FL), cycling (FL), football (FL), golf (both), handball (FL), judo (WB), rugby (FL), skating (FL), triathlon (FL)

- Gender equality is included in 39% (n=16) of the Belgian sport federations' long-term plans but only 27% (n=11) have a policy for advancing gender equality in sport. All action plans were introduced between 2019 and 2024 **12 | 13**.
- The badminton (FL), boxing (FL), cycling (FL), football (FL), golf (both), handball (FL), judo (WB), rugby (FL), skating (FL) and triathlon (FL) federations have both a policy and include gender equality in their overall long-term goals.
- Gender equality is included in the long-term plans of both **community level agencies for sport** and the **Olympic and Paralympic Committees**, yet only the community level agencies have a policy for advancing gender equality.

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GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POLICY/ACTION PLANS BY NATIONAL OLYMPIC AND/OR PARALYMPIC SPORT FEDERATIONS AND COMMUNITY LEVEL AGENCIES FOR SPORT (n=13)



- Both community level agencies for sport target gender representation in decision-making positions as well as participation. Sport Vlaanderen (FL) also targets coaching and concrete actions/measures for preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport.
- Eleven respondents (**85%**) report having a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating their action plan.
- Twelve respondents (**92%**) dedicate human resources and eight (**61.5%**) allocate funds to the implementation of the policy/action plan.
- Nine respondents (**69%**) are seeking partnerships/co-operation with other stakeholders in the implementation of the policy/action plan.

Among the respondents that have an action plan for gender equality, 11 target gender representation in participation (grassroots and/or elite sport) and eight target gender representation in decision-making positions. Five target gender representation in communication materials and coaching and also have concrete guidelines for preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport. Four target gender representation in officiating **14**.

GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGIES

17% of the sport federations are taking affirmative action and **7%** have a gender mainstreaming strategy.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION
17% (n=7)

GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY
7% (n=3)

The **Paralympic Committee** reports that female athletes are promoted not on the basis of the total number of elite female athletes, whose number can be lower than those elite male athletes, but on an equal footing with men. As a result, more female athletes benefit from greater media attention.

Both **community level agencies for sport** use affirmative action and have a gender mainstreaming strategy, while the Paralympic Committee uses just the former.

BELGIUM: CONCLUDING POINTS

Since 2020, steps have been taken to improve the situation of gender equality in sport in Belgium.

Gender equality is included in 39% (n=16) of the sport federations' long-term plans and 27% (n=11) have **a policy for advancing gender equality**.

17% of federations use **affirmative action** measures, and 7% have a **gender mainstreaming strategy**. Both Federal Offices for Sport are using affirmative action and gender mainstreaming strategy, while the Paralympic Committee uses just the former to make up for past gender discrimination and inequality in sport. Significantly, 40% of respondents, including sport federations and Sport Vlaanderen (FL), have adopted a policy and/or action plan for **preventing and combating gender-based violence in sport**.

Overall, **men dominate leadership positions** in Belgian sports organisations. Only two **(5%)** sports federations report having a **female president**, both from Wallonia-Brussels. Women comprise **25% of all board members** in sport federations and the Olympic & Paralympic Committees, and **only 24% of vice-presidents are women**.

Women remain underrepresented among coaches at **31.5%**, and out of the federations surveyed, 24% do not employ a female elite level coach.

Finally, of the total 300 sports officials who officiate elite games, **25% are women** and 75% are men.

In terms of **women's participation in sports**, the rate is **35%** across all sports in Belgium.