

Women in Olympic Governance

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Introduction

The history of women's participation in the Olympics as athletes has been well documented.¹ Their levels of participation in the nearly 100 years of the modern Games have gone from zero events and zero athletes in 1896 to 97² events and approximately 3,800 athletes in the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta. Even with this marked increase, however, women still make up only 35.2% of the total number of Olympians and participate in only 36% of the total events.³

While involvement of women as athletes is generally the most visible way for women to participate in the Olympic movement, it is by no means the only way. Women may participate as coaches, officials, members of the national traveling delegations, and in governance positions.

In focusing on governance, near the top of the ladder would be membership on the International Olympic Committee (IOC). It was in 1973 that the IOC voted to change its rules so that a woman could be elected to that body.⁴ It was not until eight years later (1981) that the first woman was elected. In 1995, Vera Caslavka of the Czech Republic became the 8th female IOC member in the nearly 100 year history. Because of the mandatory retirement of Mary Alison Glen-Haig there are presently 99 men and seven women on the IOC.⁵

Other steps on the ladder would include governance opportunities at the national level. In his chapter on "Women in the Olympic Movement" Lucas presents the United States as one of the countries with greater leadership opportunities for women;⁶ and certainly, compared to many African, Asian, middle-Eastern, and Central and South American countries, greater opportunities do seem to exist. The purpose of this study was to document the extent of women's involvement in some forms of leadership from an international perspective and to compare involvement with women in the United States Olympic Movement. This study also examines whether or not women's

involvement in Olympic Sports Governance has changed over time.

Methodology

The survey method was used to collect data at three different points in time. In the summer of 1990 the 69 National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) were surveyed to obtain data on the gender of the Executive Directors and Presidents of the organizations. With a follow-up letter sent in November, 1990, 55 of the 69 surveys were returned and usable which yielded a 79.9% return.

In 1994 additional data were collected on the NGBs for the 1991-1994 time period. Rather than the survey method, an analysis of the USOC fact books was utilized. Fact books were only able to be obtained for 1992-94, therefore the 1991 data are missing. Data were tallied by organization, year, and gender. In addition, the data were summarized across all 24 years and then divided into three time periods (1970-1979; 1980-1990; 1992-1994) and five time periods (1970-1974; 1975-1979; 1980-1984; 1985-1990; 1992-1994). These time periods' groupings were selected to observe any patterns or differences which may have occurred pre-or post- Title IX⁷ or relevant to the Amateur Sports Act.⁸

During 1995, data from 1970 to 1995 were collected from an international perspective. A list was developed comprised of the nations which had female Olympic medal winners in the winter or summer Olympic Games from 1972-1992. Countries were eliminated from this list if the country no longer existed (e.g., Yugoslavia and East and West Germany) or if there was significant national reorganization (the former USSR). Therefore, 32 countries were surveyed. A letter was sent to the United States NGBs requesting the mailing address for the sport NGB in each of those 32 countries. Based on the responses from the USOC's NGBs, requests were sent to 16 governing bodies in the 32 countries. In addition, two colleagues (one from Canada and one from Singapore) assisted with disseminating the survey material in those respective countries. Responses were received from 27 countries and 115 governing bodies. Data were grouped by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Regional Groups (see Table 1) and analyzed in the same manner

as the data collected from the NGBs of the USOC (1970-1974; 1975-1979; 1980-1984; 1985-1990; 1991-1995). Comparisons of the leadership positions (Executive Directors and Presidents) were then made between the NGBs of the USOC⁹ and the IOC Regional Groups.

Results

During the period between 1970-1995 there were 2526 Executive Directors in the International Olympic Committee Regional Groups of whom 2163 (85.6%) were male and 363 (14.4%) were female. President positions were occupied by 3200 individuals: 3055 (95.5%) male and 145 (4.5%) female. Of the possible 5726 leadership positions in the IOC Regional Groups, 5218 (91.1%) were held by males while 508 (8.9%) were held by females (see Table 2).

For 1970-1995 (excluding 1991) in the Olympic/Pan Am NGBs of the USOC there were 510 Executive Directors of whom 451 (88.4%) were male and 59 (11.6%) were female. President positions were occupied by 636 individuals: 584 (91.8%) males and 52 (8.2%) females. Of the possible 1146 leadership positions in the U.S. Olympic/Pan Am NGBs, 1035 (90.3%) were held by males and 111 (9.7%) were held by females.

Over the five time periods, both the IOC Regional Groups and the U.S. Olympic/Pan Am NGBs added Executive Directors and/or Presidents to their sport governance. While more opportunities for leadership occurred over the 25 year time period, females experienced a steady increase in number and percentage in only the regional groups of Europe and Oceania and to some degree in the U.S. Olympic/Pan Am (NGBs) (see Tables 3 and 4).

In reviewing the data by time period, the Americas showed increases for females in the 1975-1979, 1985-1990 and 1991-1995 time periods at the Executive Director position and in 1991-1995 time periods at the President position. Asia has shown the least progress for the inclusion of females in their sport governance structures. The period of greatest involvement of women in Asia was 1985-1990 when there were females at both the Executive Director and President positions (see Table 5), although the percentage was

still very small.

Another important factor in the leadership positions is the number of different individuals who had the opportunity to hold either an Executive Director or President position. Over the 25 year time period, there were 1303 different individuals who were either an Executive Director or President; 1178 (90.4%) were male and 125 (9.6%) were female (see Table 6). The greatest number of different individuals (780) held the position of President. Of those 780 individuals, 55 (7.1%) were female. Even though there are fewer opportunities at the Executive Director position, females are twice as likely to be selected for the Executive Director position than the President position. In analyzing the data by time period, except for the U.S. Olympic/Pan Am, the greater opportunities for females occurred in the 80's and there has been a general decline since then. Over time the group which had the highest percentage of different females in leadership positions is Oceania. The slowest progress appears to be in Asia and Europe.

Discussions

The opportunities for women to be involved in Olympic governance have been slow in developing. This should come as no surprise when one considers that many of the governance structures (including the IOC itself) have been among the leaders historically in discouraging women's involvement in sport. When the opportunities have arisen, these opportunities predominantly come in a few sports rather than being across all sports. In this sample, when a woman was in an Executive Director position, the involvement was primarily in 5 sports: equestrian, field hockey, gymnastics, speed skating, and synchronized swimming. These sports accounted for 67% of the total opportunities for women as Executive Directors. The pattern of select sports was even more pronounced in the President position. The sports of field hockey, speed skating, and synchronized swimming provided 64% of the opportunities for women. Additionally, in this sample, no woman has occupied a President position in 11 of the 24 sports. The sports in which women have been involved in leadership positions have been either sports traditionally associated with women's participation or they are among the less visible sports on the Olympic program.

The pattern of minimal and sporadic involvement of women in leadership of the NGBs is consistent with the level of involvement in other governance structures of the Olympic movement. In addition to the involvement of women on the IOC (seven of 106), there are six women who serve as President of their National Olympic Committees (Czech Republic, Fiji, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Romania, and Tonga)¹⁰ of the total 197 National Olympic Committees.¹¹ Of the 31 International Sport Federations, four (badminton, equestrian, netball, orienteering) have women Presidents and four (field hockey, tennis, netball, and waterskiing) have women Executive Directors.¹² Again it is worth noting that the sports are either traditionally women's sports or are less visible in the Olympic movement. Half of the sports with women in leadership positions at the International level are not yet Olympic sports.

In spite of the current minimal involvement of women in sport governance, there are several initiatives throughout the world which have as an objective increasing women's involvement in sport. These include Title IX in the United States, the 1992 European Sports Charter, the work of the Canadian Sport Coalition, and the Women's Sport Promotion Unit of the Australian Sports Commission.¹³ It remains to be seen what will be the impact of these initiatives. Of additional importance, however, is to recognize the geographic/cultural selectiveness of the attempts to be more inclusive of women. As Lucas notes in comparing the opportunities for women as athletes and as administrators:

Increasing the number of female administrators in the worldwide movement is an even more challenging task, because each nation moves at its own speed toward equal opportunities for both sexes. Somehow more, talented women must find their way into local, national, and international administrative sporting positions and exactly like men do, over time, move up the ladder.¹⁴

The opportunities to reach even the bottom rung of the ladder seem more difficult in some countries than others. In some Islamic countries, the participation of women in sports is prohibited, ostensibly for religious reasons. In many developing countries, as Kidane notes, "...the priority is not to train woman athletes but to remove their daily burden of misery and poverty."¹⁵ While these may indeed be reasons in a few instances, the primary reason for the very slow inclusion of women in Olympic governance is based in a patriarchal hegemony which has been pervasive in sport.

Recommendations

It is always difficult to change the status quo. There are actions, however, which can be taken to increase women's involvement in sport leadership in the Olympic movement. While some of these suggestions will pertain to women themselves, it is important to recognize that a current lack of women's involvement is not the fault of women. The structures and practices of sport must be impacted. The following suggestions address both the current structures and practices as well as the preparation of additional women to assume leadership positions.

- People need to start by examining their own biases regarding gender as well as other stereotypes which may be operating to limit opportunities.

- Gender sensitive people need to monitor the hiring and selection practices for leadership roles. They also need to help people in decision-making positions understand the role which gender may have in their decision-making and apply pressure for the appointment of women within governing bodies.

- The mass media have the power to bring the lack of women in leadership to the attention of the general public. The information about women's involvement in sport needs to be shared with people in the media.

- There should be ongoing dialogue centered on women's involvement in Olympic governance at professional conferences as

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well as through professional and popular publications.¹⁶

-In sport management programs, students (male and female) need to be exposed to the Olympic movement as a career option.

-Women should be encouraged to apply for internships in the National Governing Bodies as well as other affiliated organizations.

-Governing bodies should make gender inclusion a priority by encouraging greater involvement of women in the various governing bodies.

-Women need to be sure they are educated about the National Governing Bodies and other organizations within the Olympic movement. This knowledge should entail not only how these groups function, but also how to be effective in entering and impacting these organizations.

-By practice or by policy, governing bodies could alternate the President position by gender.

-Organizations should examine their own hiring and selection procedures to ensure that qualified women are aware of the positions and have an opportunity to be fairly considered for the positions.

Women who are concerned with the opportunities for women certainly cannot bring about the changes alone. Women often feel isolated, and therefore powerless to bring about change, because there are so few of them.¹⁷ They may also feel limited in the changes they can make and the activism in which they can engage because of fear of compromising job security or of decreasing their opportunity to be selected for leadership positions. This means that men who are concerned about the equality of opportunity for all individuals and for the necessity of involving qualified people regardless of factors, such as gender, need to be actively involved in changing the status quo. The changes for greater involvement of women in the Olympics have been slow. It seems, however, to be inevitable. As concerned individuals employ their own abilities to impact their spheres of influence and utilize

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the existing legislation, a similar study to this one undertaken several years from now may indicate much more equitable participation by women in leadership positions of Olympic governance groups.

Acknowledgment: The authors would like to thank Peter Horton (Singapore) and Susan Forbes (Canada) for their assistance with the data collection from those two countries.

Endnotes

1. The following is a brief listing of some of the articles and book chapters which have documented the history of women's participation as athletes in the Olympics: Ellen W. Gerber, Jan Felshin, Pearl Berlin, and Waneen Wyrick, The American Woman in Sport, Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1974, pp. 136-166; Mary A. Boutillier and Lucinda SanGiovanni, The Sporting Woman, Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, Publisher, Inc., 1983, pp. 219-235. Jane Leder, Grace and Glory: A Century of Women in the Olympics, Washington, D.C.: Multi-Media Partners, Ltd, 1996. Most Books of detailing the history of the Olympic Games include discussion of women's involvement. Periodicals such as the Journal of Sport History and the Olympic Review also include articles about female athletes in the Olympic Games.

2. A listing of events for the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta was included in the Olympic Preview Issue of Sports Illustrated (July 22, 1996, pp. 232-248). The events open to men only totaled 163; those open to women only totaled 97. (Equestrian events and those not separated by sex, and badminton includes 1 event, mixed doubles, which has both a male and female competitor.)

3. George Diaz, "Women Get Their Share." Chicago Tribune, July 28, 1996, Section 3, p. 10.

4. Mary H. Leigh, "The Enigma of Avery Brundage and Women Athletes," Arena Review, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1980, pp. 11-21.

5. Joanna Davenport, "Breaking into the Rings: Women on the IOC." Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Vol. 67, No. 5, May/June 1996.

6. John A. Lucas, Future of the Olympic Games, Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books, 1992, p. 139-140.

7. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the principle federal law which prohibits sex discrimination in education. It provides: "[n]o person

in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance..." There are, however, certain exceptions to Title IX's coverage. For example, it does not apply to admissions practices in elementary or secondary schools or private undergraduate institutions, to social fraternities or sororities, or to voluntary youth service organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, or Girl Scouts. In addition, a covered institution, actually controlled by a religious organization may seek an exemption from a particular requirement of the law insofar as application of Title IX in the respect would not be consistent with a specific tenant of such religious organization." Title IX: A Practical Guide to Achieving Sex Equity in Education, Washington, D.C.: National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, November, 1988, p. 1.

8. Amateur Sports Act 1978 (Federal Law 95-606) - The Act was designed to promote and coordinate amateur athletic activities in the United States, to recognize certain rights for U.S. Athletes, to provide for the resolution of disputes involving national sports organizations and/or athletes, as well as to designate the United States Olympic Committee as the central coordinating agency for all sports on the programs for the Olympic and Pan American Games. Jeffrey O. Segrave and Donald Chu, The Olympic Games in Transition, Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Books, 1988, p. 144.

9. Olympic/Pan Am Organizations - Organizations which are recognized by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) as the National Sports Governing Bodies for the sports on the programs for the Olympic and Pan American Games.

10. Joanna Davenport, "Breaking into the Rings: Women on the IOC," p. 29.

11. United States Olympic Committee, 1996 USOC Factbook.

12. Davenport, "Breaking into the Rings: Women on the IOC." p. 29.

13. Jennifer Hargreaves, Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sports. London: Routledge, 1994.

14. Lucas, John. Future of the Olympic Games, p. 134.

15. Cited in Davenport, "Breaking into the Rings: Women in the IOC," p. 30.

16. William F. Stier Jr., "Women in the Olympic Movement: Advancing Women's Roles Through Education," Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. Vol. 62, No. 9, November/December, 1991, p. 65.

17. Connie M. Thorngren and Barbara S. Eisenbarth, "Games Yet to be Played: Equity in Sport." Newton, Massachusetts: Women's Educational Equity Act Dissemination Center, Eric Document ED 380413.

Table 1

TABLE 1 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
REGIONAL GROUPS

Africa 0/2*	Americas 3/6	Asia 6/6	Europe 16/17	Oceania 2/2
Morocco Zimbabwe	Argentina Canada Costa Rica Cuba Jamaica Peru United States**	Indonesia Japan North Korea People's Republic of China Singapore South Korea	Austria Belgium Bulgaria Denmark Finland France Great Britain Holland (The Netherlands) Hungary Italy Liechtenstein Norway Poland Portugal Romania Sweden Switzerland	Australia New Zealand

*Indicated number returned/total

**Data from the United States are not included in the Americas; they will be used for comparison.

Table 2TABLE 2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/PRESIDENT POSITIONS BY GENDER *
1970-1995

Position and Gender	1970-79			1980-90			1991-1995	Totals
	1970-74	1970-79		1980-84	1985-7990			1970-1995
Executive Director								
Male	367 (89.1%)	412 (87.3%)	779 (88.1%)	432 (86.9%)	512 (83.4%)	944 (84.9%)	440 (82.9%)	2163 (85.6%)
Female	45 (10.9%)	60 (12.7%)	105 (11.9%)	65 (13.1%)	102 (16.6%)	167 (15.1%)	91 (17.1%)	363 (14.4%)
Totals	412	472	884	497	614	1111	531	2526
President								
Male	474 (96.9%)	489 (95.7%)	963 (96.3%)	501 (95.8%)	594 (94.0%)	1596 (96.4%)	496 (91.2%)	3055 (95.5%)
Female	15 (3.1%)	22 (4.3%)	37 (3.7%)	22 (4.2%)	38 (6.0%)	60 (3.6%)	48 (8.8%)	145 (4.5%)
Totals	489	511	1000	523	632	1656	544	3200

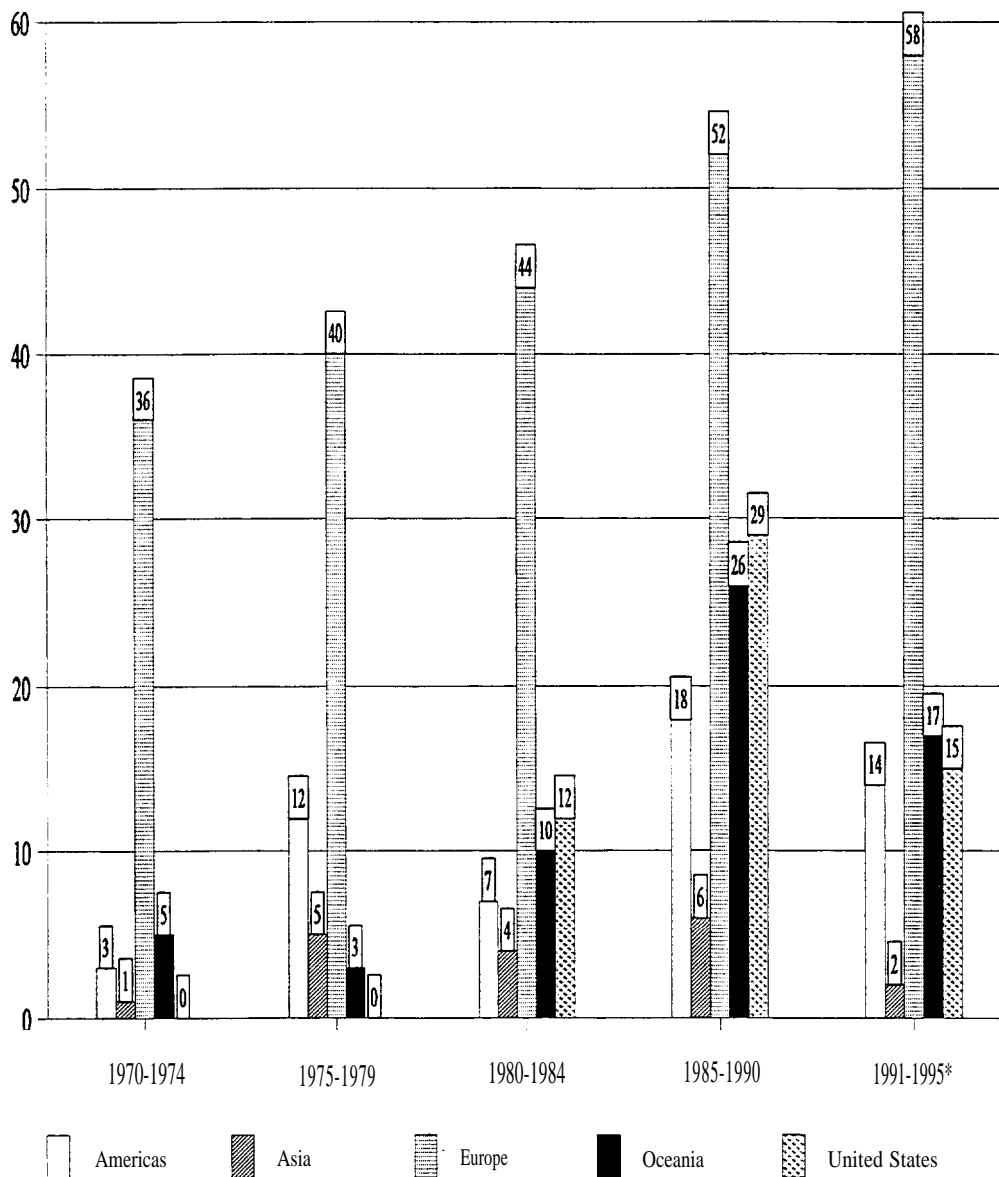
* Represents total number of individuals.

Table 3

TABLE 3 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
REGIONAL GROUPS

Females in Executive Director Positions

1970-1995



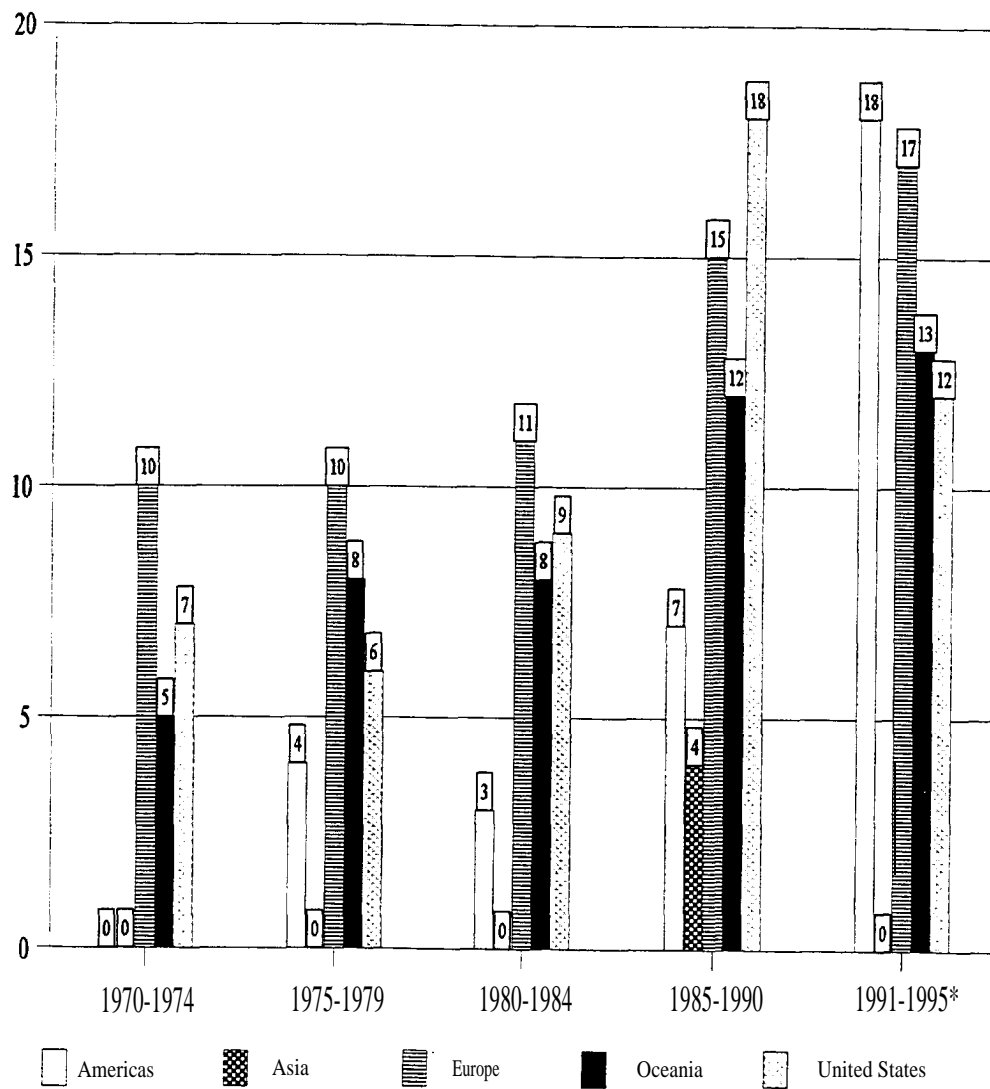
*United States Olympic/Pan Am NGBs, 1992-1994 only.

Table 4

TABLE 4 INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE
REGIONAL GROUPS

Females in President Positions

1970-1995



*United States Olympic/Pan Am NGBs, 1992-1994 only.

Table 5
 TABLE 5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/PRESIDENT POSITIONS
 BY GENDER TIME PERIOD (1970-1995)
 IOC Regional Groups*
 and the Olympic/Pan Am of the United States*

1970-1974					
Position	Americas (N=18)	Asia (N=13)	Europe (N=74)	Oceania (N=10)	U.S. (N=31)
Executive Director					
Male	42 (93.3%)	40 (97.6%)	275 (88.4%)	10 (66.7%)	52 (100.0%)
Female	3 (6.7%)	1 (2.4%)	36 (11.6%)	5 (33.3%)	0
President					
Male	71 (100.0%)	51 (100.0%)	322 (96.9%)	30 (85.7%)	93 (93.0%)
Female	0	0	10 (3.1%)	5 (14.3%)	7 (7.0%)
1975-1979					
Position	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania	U.S.
Executive Director					
Male	56 (82.4%)	48 (90.6%)	291 (87.9%)	17 (85.0%)	71 (100.0%)
Female	12 (17.6%)	5 (9.4%)	40 (12.1%)	3 (15.0%)	0
President					
Male	71 (94.7%)	63 (100.0%)	323 (96.9%)	32 (80.0%)	110 (94.8%)
Female	4 (5.3%)	0	10 (3.1%)	8 (20.0%)	6 (5.2%)
1980-1984					
Position	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania	U.S.
Executive Director					
Male	63 (90.0%)	51 (92.7%)	296 (87.1%)	22 (68.8%)	99 (89.2%)
Female	7 (10.0%)	4 (7.3%)	44 (12.9%)	10 (31.2%)	12 (10.8%)
President					
Male	76 (96.2%)	65 (100.0%)	324 (96.7%)	36 (81.8%)	126 (93.3%)
Female	3 (3.8%)	0	11 (3.3%)	8 (18.2%)	9 (6.7%)
1985-1990					
Position	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania	U.S.
Executive Director					
Male	67 (78.8%)	57 (90.5%)	364 (87.5%)	24 (48.0%)	132 (81.9%)
Female	18 (21.2%)	6 (9.5%)	52 (12.5%)	26 (52.0%)	29 (18.1%)
President					
Male	91 (92.9%)	74 (94.9%)	381 (96.2%)	48 (80.0%)	149 (89.2%)
Female	7 (7.1%)	4 (5.1%)	15 (3.8%)	12 (20.0%)	18 (10.8%)
1991-1995					
Position	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania	U.S.**
Executive Director					
Male	66 (82.5%)	53 (96.4%)	293 (83.5%)	28 (62.2%)	97 (84.3%)
Female	14 (17.5%)	2 (3.6%)	58 (16.5%)	17 (37.8%)	18 (15.7%)
President					
Male	72 (80.0%)	65 (100.0%)	322 (94.9%)	37 (74.0%)	106 (89.8%)
Female	18 (20.0%)	0	17 (5.1%)	13 (26.0%)	12 (10.2%)

*Total number of individuals
 **1992-1994

N= Total number of reporting NGBs

Table 6

Table 6

Changes in Leadership by Position
By Gender
(IOC Regional Groups & United States)

		Start			70-74			75-79			80-84			85-90			91-95			Totals		
		M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F	M	F	%F
Americas	E.D.	5	0	0	10	2	17	12	2	14	8	3	27	11	6	35	13	4	26	59	17	22
	Pres.	13	0	0	23	0	0	22	3	12	26	0	0	23	3	12	23	7	23	130	13	9
Asia	E.D.	8	0	0	7	1	13	13	0	0	13	1	7	14	0	0	7	0	0	62	2	3
	Pres.	10	0	0	6	0	0	14	0	0	8	0	0	8	1	11	7	0	0	53	1	2
Europe	E.D.	53	0	0	29	3	9	38	4	10	22	5	19	46	6	12	44	5	10	232	23	9
	Pres.	64	2	3	41	1	2	60	2	3	45	4	2	79	4	5	63	3	5	352	13	4
Oceania	E.D.	2	1	53	1	0	0	4	2	33	2	3	60	7	5	42	3	1	25	19	12	39
	Pres.	6	1	14	4	0	0	7	2	22	5	2	29	5	3	38	5	3	38	32	11	26
U.S.A.	E.D.	20	1	5	3	1	25	8	0	0	16	3	16	19	4	17	15	7	32	81	16	16
	Pres.	28	2	7	19	2	10	31	2	6	26	4	13	33	2	6	21	5	15	158	17	10
Totals	E.D.	88	2	2	50	7	12	75	8	10	61	15	20	97	21	18	82	17	17	453	70	13
	Pres.	121	2	3	93	3	3	134	9	6	110	7	6	148	13	8	119	18	13	725	55	7

* Gender of person in position in 1970

**If a change was made, the gender of incoming individual is counted.

