

From Auckland to Birmingham

IWG Progress Report
2022-2026

Key Insights



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1.0 Introduction

- The International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) was established in 1994 to advance gender equality, aiming to empower women and girls in and through sport.
- The IWG has commissioned a report on progress in the international women and sport movement each quadrennial since 1998.
- All IWG Progress Reports can be found on the Insight Hub. 
- These reports provide a longitudinal evidence base, offering a global assessment of progress towards gender equality in and through sport.
- They provide governments, policy-makers, sport organisations, researchers and advocates with evidence to support future policies, strategies and interventions.
- This is the eighth report in the series and records activity undertaken between 2022 and 2025 during the term of the IWG UK Secretariat, hosted by the Sport and Recreation Alliance.  
- The research was undertaken by a team at the University of Hertfordshire, grounded in the IWG's International Treaty, known as the Brighton Declaration/Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration, previous Progress Reports, regional mapping and a survey of Declaration signatories.
- The survey response rate was 14% (55 of 384 active signatories), compared with 27% in the 2022 Report and 37% in 2018. As a result, findings should be treated as indicative rather than representative.
- The report focuses not only on what organisations are doing, but also on the factors that enable or inhibit action.

14%

2026 survey response rate

55

survey responses

32 yrs

research legacy

2.0 2026 Context

2.1 2026 Priority Issues

This Progress Report records activities undertaken in the years from 2022-2025. There is much to celebrate, alongside recurring and emerging challenges.

The main priority issues identified in the 2026 Progress Report are:

- Under-representation in decision-making positions
- Under-representation as coaches and instructors
- Discrimination/gender bias

2.2 2026 Progress report focus

The topics covered in this report are:

- The International Women and Sport Landscape
- Achieving Equity: Issues and Action
- Policy, Strategy and Progress
- Leadership
- Participation in Physical Activity and Sport
- High Performance Sport
- Health and Well-being
- Family-Friendly Places
- Media

The report provides:

- An overview of the current situation including data and comparative analysis with the previous reporting periods 2018-2021 and 2013-2017
- Examples of action being taken
- Reasons for action and inaction
- Insights based on the evidence available
- A summary of headline findings with areas for future action.



3.0 International women and sport landscape

- The IWG is a global ***network of networks and organisations*** dedicated to advancing gender equity in sport and physical activity.
- International and regional organisations are active across governance, participation, leadership, safeguarding, research, advocacy, education and athlete development.
- The report identifies substantial activity across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania, alongside international organisations with global reach.
- Examples demonstrate the value of regional networks, locally grounded programmes, research centres and cross-sector partnerships in translating gender-equity commitments into practice.
- The report identifies value in a shared global database of organisations, activities and resources to improve visibility, collaboration and knowledge exchange.



This icon next to an organisation indicates that additional information or supporting resources are available. Clicking the icon will open the relevant link in a web browser.



3.1 International organisations

Table 1 - Activities and resources: International Organisations

Organisation		Purpose	Policy/Framework/Practice
BOLD Alliance		Initiated in the Global South, a global initiative leveraging the power of physical education, physical activity and sport (PEPAS) to advance the health, rights and empowerment of women and girls	
Global Alliance for Female Athletes		Partnership between national sports institutes for trustworthy knowledge dissemination	
Global Observatory for Gender Equality and Sport (The GO)		To advance gender equality and empower women and girls in all their diversity in and through physical education, physical activity, and sport (PEPAS)	Knowledge Hub including frameworks, policy briefs, and datasets
Guardian Girls International (GGI)		Advance gender equality and end violence against women and girls through sports, advocacy, education, and community engagement	Combat sports, conferences
International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women (IAPESGW)		Facilitate growth and development, educational and professional experiences, in the areas of physical education, sport, physical activity and dance	Webinars, international and regional conferences
International Olympic Committee (IOC) Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission		Advises on the implementation of the gender equality and inclusion strategy to make informed and balanced decisions to advance gender equality in sport on and off the field of play	IOC Gender Equality and Inclusion Framework
International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA)		Empower organisations worldwide to enable citizens to enjoy their human right to move	Women in Sport Platform Provides cross-country examples and good practices promoting women's participation, especially at grassroots and community levels.

Table 1 (continued) - Activities and resources: International organisations

Organisation		Purpose	Policy/Framework/Practice
International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG)		The world's largest network dedicated to advancing equity and equality for women and girls in sport and physical activity. The 2022-2026 IWG Strategy focused on system change so that sport and physical activity contribute to a world where all women and girls thrive	Brighton plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration – international treaty for gender equity IWG Insight Hub – global knowledge repository
The Islamic Solidarity Sports Association (ISSA)		An independent organization affiliated to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), with a membership of 57 countries which aims to support all athletes and develop sport across its member countries	The multi-sport Islamic Solidarity Games
Safe Sport International		Dedicated to advancing safe sport through evidence, accountability, and collaboration	Courses and resources
The Association For International Sport for All (TAFISA)		Believes Sport for All and physical activity are basic human rights for all people, regardless of sex, age, race, religion, ability level or socio-economic background, and supports the preservation, promotion and development of traditional sports and games	Sports events, congresses, and resources
UNESCO - Sport and Gender Equality Game Plan		Advance women's rights, participation, protection and empowerment in sport.	Guides sport governance towards evidence-based policies that address systemic inequalities and promote safe, equitable access.
UN Women Sports for Generation Equality		To make the sports ecosystem part of a powerful multi-stakeholder coalition to make gender equality a lived reality in and through sport	Toolkit to support sports organizations and institutions in integrating gender equality across all levels of sports
WomenSport International (WSI)		To encourage increased opportunities and positive change for women and girls at all levels of involvement of sport and physical activity	Research-based advocacy Supports the Global Sport Policy Tracker
Women's Sports Alliance (WSA)		A women's sport-focused advisory business that leverages female athlete growth, by combining athlete insight with brand intelligence	Network and tools to drive commercial value of women's sports
Women Win		Women Win advances girls' and women's rights amidst scarce resources that are available.	GRLS advances the playing field that empowers adolescent girls and young women to exercise their rights through sport and play

3.2.1 Africa

Table 2 - Activities and resources: African organisations

Country/Region	Organisation	Purpose
Africa	Women Sport Africa Network (WSAN)	 An independent network across Africa offering a platform for shared learning, collective action, mobilisation, and celebration of women in sports.
Africa	African Union Sports Council	 Coordination of the African Sports Movement and a forum for concerted action between Member States for the promotion and development of sports and development through sport in Africa
Africa and French-speaking countries	Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sport of French-Speaking Countries (CONFEJES)	 An intergovernmental institution that works to promote Youth, Sports and Leisure within the Francophone space
Botswana	Women and Sport Botswana	 Part of the Botswana National Sports Commission focused on increasing participation of women and girls in sports and other recreational activities
Burundi and Rwanda	Play International	 “Toutes en Sport”: aimed at reducing gender inequalities and promoting safe, inclusive sport opportunities for girls and women.
East Africa	DBA Africa Sports Development	 Grassroots sports initiatives that build life skills, confidence, and communities. Work prioritises girls’ inclusion, local leadership, and long-term impact.
Ghana	Women in Sport Association	 Bringing women in sports together by awarding their Achievements.
Kenya	Moving the Goalposts (MTG)	 Using football to break down barriers for women and girls in Kenya’s coastal communities
Morocco	Tibu Africa	 Focuses on the education and socio-economic integration of young people through sport

Table 2 (continued) - Activities and resources: African organisations

Country/Region	Organisation	Purpose
Seychelles	Seychelles Women and Sports Association (SWASA) 	Ensure that girls and women have access to a complete range of opportunities and choices, and also equity as participants and leaders in sports and physical activities
South Africa	The South African Women and Sport Foundation 	Dedicated to promoting gender equity and empowerment through sport to ensure that the positive impact of sport on South African women is fully realised, while also recognising and rewarding the significant contributions women make within the sporting world.
South Africa	Women in Sports Trust (WIST) 	Driving meaningful transformation and contributing to the economic empowerment of black women, both abled and disabled
Zambia	National Organisation for Women in Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation (NOWSPAR) 	Aims to encourage and promote engagement of women and girls in all areas, levels and abilities in physical activity, sport and recreation for fun and excellence, promoting women's rights to and through sport



3.2.2 Americas

Table 3 - Activities and resources: Americas organisations

Country/Region	Organisation		Purpose
Canada	Canadian Women & Sport		Championing gender equity in sport to drive meaningful change in sport and across society. Workshops; Same Game Toolkit; Rally Report.
Canada	Commonwealth Sport Canada		Responsible for the growth and development of the Commonwealth sport movement in Canada. Women Coach Internship Programme.
USA	Tucker Centre for Research on Girls & Women in Sport		Interdisciplinary research centre to accelerate change for girls and women in sport and physical activity. Research, educational opportunities, community outreach.
USA	United Women's Sports		Building a sustainable women's sports business expanding professional careers in sport
USA	Women's Sports Foundation (USA)		A major nonprofit advocacy organisation dedicated to advancing the lives of girls and women through sport and physical activity

3.2.3 Asia

Table 4 - Activities and resources: Asian organisations

Country/Region	Organisation		Purpose
Cambodia	Globalteer Sport Programme		Goals for Girls aims to help young women reclaim the sports field and learn what roles they can occupy on the field and in wider society
India	Yuwa-India		Sports program to build character, confidence, and courage, helping girls to break the cycle of poverty
Israel	Athena – The Centre for Promotion of Women’s Sports in Israel		Recruit, retain and promote girls, young women and women in various sports
Japan	Japan Association of Physical Education for Women (JAPEW)		Brings together people involved in women's physical education in Japan for research and practice
Japan	The Japanese Centre for Research on Women in Sport		Aims to support female athletes and improve the environment for women in sport from the perspective of “research”. Women Leaders Academy.
Philippines	Philippine Women in Sports		The Women in Sport arm of the Philippine Sports Commission
Singapore	Women in Sport Committee (WSC)		Part of Singapore National Olympic Council to meet the needs and aspirations of women and girls in sport
South-East Asia and Japan	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Japan		Project to promote gender equality through sports to create a society where women and girls in ASEAN countries can safely and securely access sports
Taiwan	Taiwan Sport Forward Association		Assisting underprivileged young athletes, striving for gender equality in sports, and promoting sports diplomacy

Table 4 (continued) - Activities and resources: Asian organisations

Country/Region	Organisation		Purpose
United Arab Emirates	Fatima Bint Mubarak Ladies Sports Academy (FBMA)		Enabling women to participate in sports through events, community activities, and local talent development
United Arab Emirates	Sharjah Women's Sports Club		Athletic and social development of women and their advancement to the podium



3.2.4 Europe

Table 5 - Activities and resources: European organisations

Country/Region	Organisation	Purpose
Europe	Council of Europe	To promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe and beyond. All In Plus: highlight the benefits of greater gender equality in sport, the relative invisibility of women in sport, and the ongoing lack of awareness about gender imbalance in sport
Europe	European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation (EGLSF)	Stimulate integration in sport and emancipation of athletes regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation
Europe	European Non-Governmental Sport Organisation (ENGSO)	Advocates for empowered grassroots sport within EU sports policy and raises awareness on the societal role of sport. Equality Within Sport (EWS): Sport4CERV - Enabling Equality through Sport project.
Europe	European Union	Promote integrity and good governance in sport by advocating for structural and cultural changes regarding gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions. Guidance to Achieve More Equal Leadership in Sport (GAMES).
Europe	Soroptimist Europe	Advocates for women's and girls' rights to educate, empower and enable women and girls. Women and Sport: The Long Road to Equality: A grassroots-to-policy initiative blending advocacy, cultural events, education and visibility campaigns on women's sport equality.
Europe	Union of Sport Federations of Catalonia (UFEC)	Eliminating the gender gap in federated sport and promoting inclusive and sustainable sport
Europe	WINS (Women IN Sport officials)	Raising the growth and participation of female sport officials in Europe. WINS Women Sport Officials Toolkit.

Table 5 (continued) - Activities and resources: European organisations

Country/Region	Organisation	Purpose
Belgium	Sport Vlaanderen 	Offers everyone in Flanders as many opportunities as possible to participate in sports and exercise. Projects and knowledge platform for gender equality.
Ireland	míde 	Interdisciplinary research to understand, intervene on and ultimately improve the health, wellbeing, participation and performance of women and girls in and through, sport, exercise, and physical activity
Switzerland	Changing the Narrative in Sport (CTN) 	Redefining traditional narratives in sports through connection, education, and innovation, to develop inclusive, community focused initiatives. Link to HerStory.
Switzerland	Lausanne Network for Women in Sport (LNWIS) 	Informal network and mentoring for women working in sport federations in Lausanne Switzerland
Turkey	Association for Sports and Physical Activity for Women (KASFAD) 	Creating conditions for women and girls to participate in sports and physical activity in a safe and equitable environment in Turkey



Table 5 (continued) - Activities and resources: European organisations

Country/Region	Organisation	Purpose
United Kingdom	Sport England	Uniting the Movement: strategy aimed at reducing inequalities and tackling inactivity. Supports organisations dedicated to gender equity, women and sport:  • Women in Sport: transforming sport for the benefit of every woman and girl in the UK.  • Women’s Sport Collective: community for women working in sport.  • Women’s Sport Trust: focuses on visibility, investment, and audience growth



3.2.5 Oceania

Table 6 - Activities and resources: Oceanian organisations

Country/Region	Organisation		Purpose
Oceania	Equity Commission Oceania (ECO)		Established by the Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC) to promote and coordinate the involvement of women in sport across the Oceania region
Oceania	Oceania Football Confederation (OFC)		Partnership with UN Women to improve gender equality, end violence against girls and women, and empowering women and girls through football. Link to the This Is How We Football; Gender Equality Playbook.
Australia	Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade		Supporting partnerships across the Pacific that use sport to bring people together, champion inclusion and create opportunity
Australia	Commonwealth Games Australia		Administer, control and coordinate the participation of Australian program sports, athletes and officials in the Commonwealth Games. Empowering Women Initiative: supports programs and experiences that create opportunities for women and girls across Oceania.
Australia	Women Sport Australia (WSA)		Dedicated to systemic and cultural change to create a more equitable future for women and girls in Australian sport through advocacy, amplification and action
New Zealand	Women in Sport Aotearoa		WISPA is a charity that exists to transform society through leadership, advocacy and evidence, ensuring that all women and girls gain equity of opportunity to participate, compete and build careers in play, active recreation and sport in Aotearoa New Zealand. Link to the Insight Hub: insights that show how individuals and organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand and Oceania are positively impacting the landscape for women and girls in play, active recreation and sport.

4.0 Achieving Equity: Issues and Action

There are currently three key international Declarations/ Frameworks for Gender Equity and sport with collaborative partnerships between the organisations leading each of them: the IWG's Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration; UN Women's Sport for Generation Equality Framework; and the IOC's Gender Equality and Inclusion Framework.

Consistent themes and principles that are referenced in each of these to achieve gender equity are:

- Participation opportunities
- Leadership and governance
- Media portrayal and visibility
- Investment and resource allocation
- Safe sport and preventing gender-based violence
- Monitoring and reporting on progress.



4.1 Key Issues for Urgent Attention

The survey respondents were asked to highlight the top three inequities faced by women and girls in sport and physical activity which require the most urgent attention.

The most significant issues identified by the organisations who responded to this question are summarised in Table 7, and the barriers identified by each Continent are in Table 8.

Table 7: Issues for urgent action

Issues for urgent action	2026 Report (N=52)	2022 Report (N=96)	2018 Report (N=158)
Under-representation in decision-making positions	73%	56%	53%
Under-representation as coaches and instructors	44%	40%	38%
Discrimination/ gender bias	42%	34%	19%
Gender stereotyping	31%	19%	Not asked
Less media coverage	23%	25%	27%

Table 8: Barriers by continent

Continent	Most significant barrier to achieving equity
Africa	Cultural norms
Americas	Resource
Asia	Gender stereotype
Europe	Resources and leadership
Oceania	Access and visibility
International	Cultural barriers and structural inequality



4.2 Actions to Achieve Equity

The priority actions to achieve equity stated by each Continent are summarised below.

Table 9: Actions by continent

Continent	Actions to achieve equity
Africa	Education and Awareness Campaigns
Americas	Scholarships, grants and gender-balanced leadership
Asia	Programmes
Europe	Research, investment, programmes and advocacy
Oceania	Policy changes
International	Campaigns and governance changes

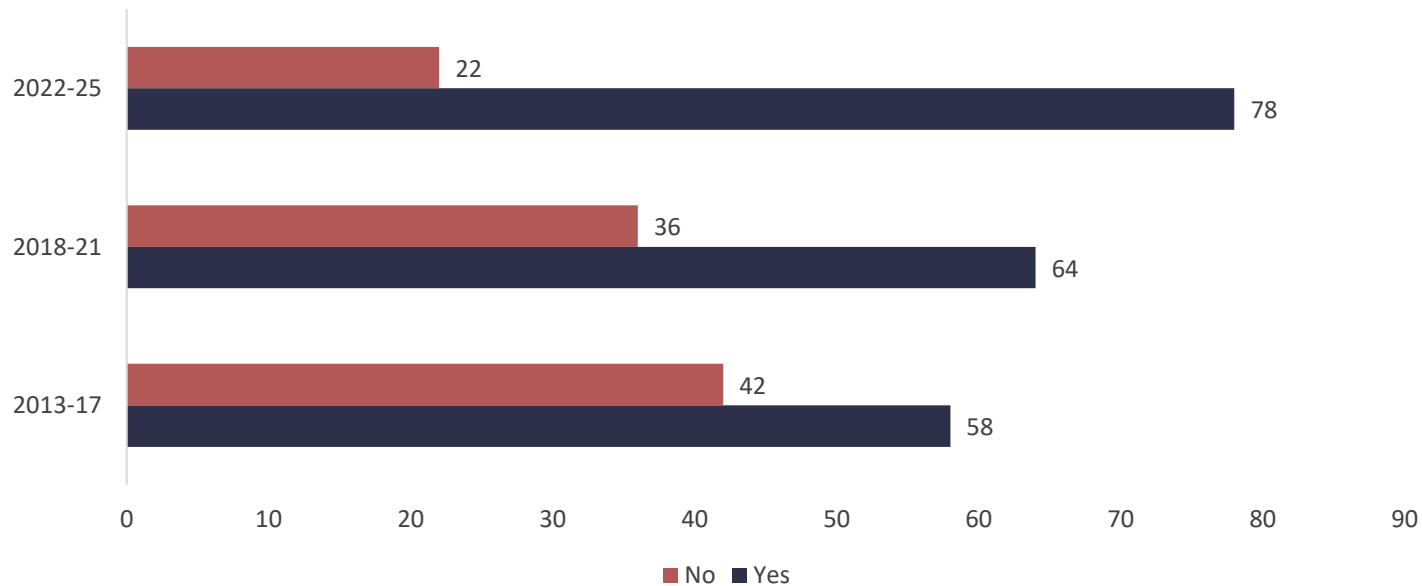
5.0 Policy, Strategy and Progress

An outcome of the first World Conference on Women and Sport in 1994 was the adoption of an international treaty which became known as the Brighton Declaration. Since then, there has been recognition of the value of having policies and plans which commit organisations to programmes of work toward gender equity.

5.1 Gender policy development

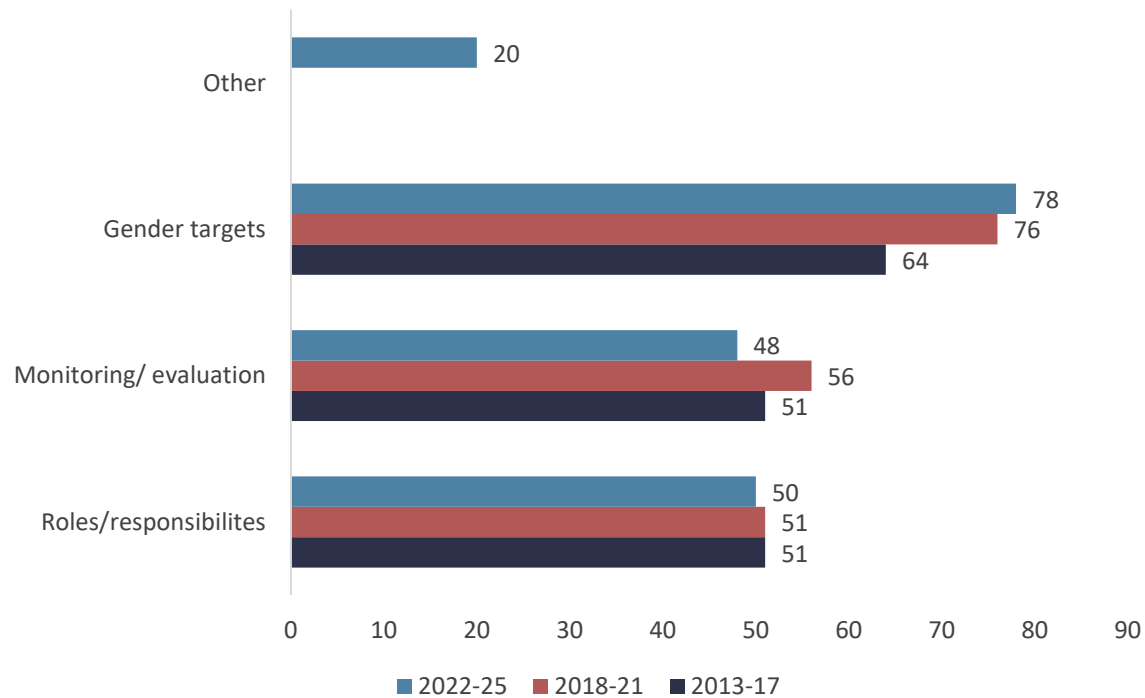
Since 2022, there has been an increase in the percentage of respondent organisations with a gender equity policy and/or action plan (from 64% to 78%).

Figure 1: Organisations with a gender equity policy and/or action plan (n=52)



Since 2022, of the 20 organisations that provided information about the features of their policy or action plans, there has been an increased percentage in the use of gender targets, and half of the organisations continue to have dedicated roles and responsibilities. However, there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of organisations undertaking monitoring and evaluation.

Figure 2: Features of policy/action plans (n=20)



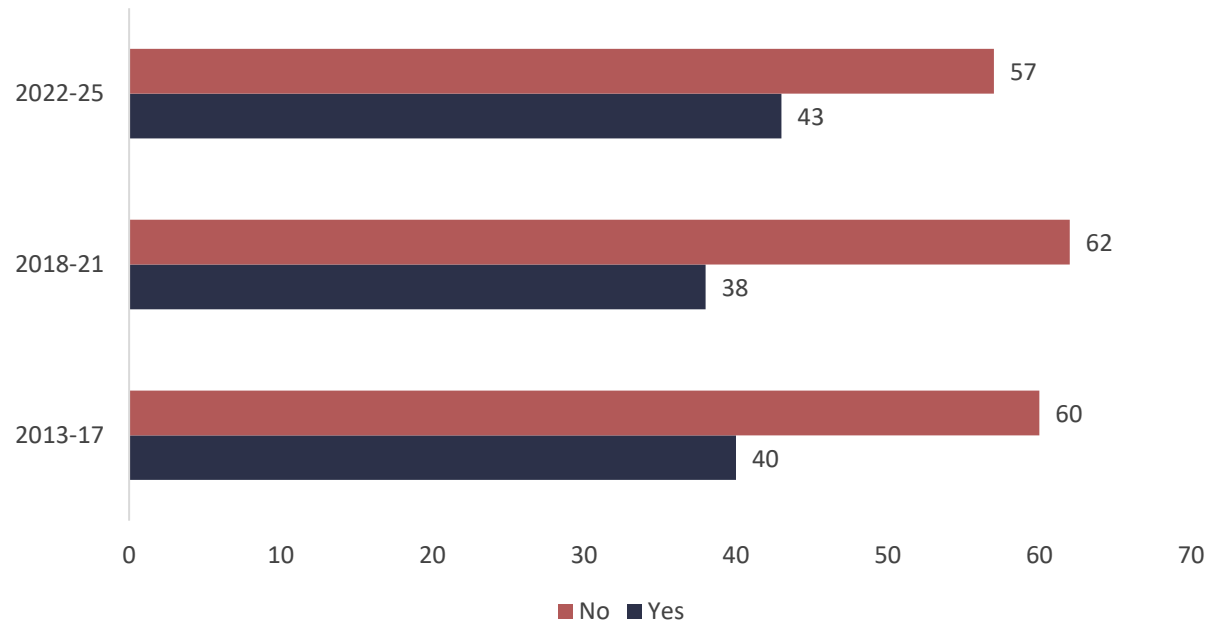
5.2 Progress

There is concerning evidence that females remain significantly underrepresented within sport and exercise science research globally¹. The percentage of organisations undertaking research focusing on females in sport and physical activity has slightly increased from the previous two Progress Reports but it remains the case that less than half of the survey respondents (43%) are commissioning or undertaking such research.

Without consistent research, monitoring and evaluation, it remains difficult to demonstrate long-term impact or identify where investment should be targeted.



Figure 3: Organisations undertaking research focusing on females in sport and physical activity (n=50)



¹ Cowley, E., Olenick, A., & McNulty, K. & Ross, Emma. (2021). "Invisible Sportswomen": The Sex Data Gap in Sport and Exercise Science Research. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*. 29. 1-6. 10.1123/wspaj.2021-0028.

6.0 Leadership

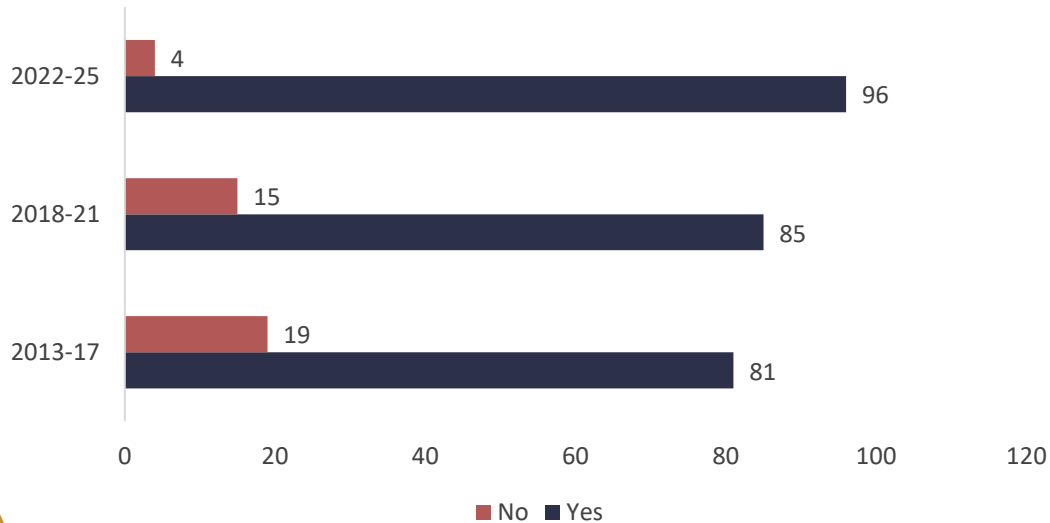
Leadership is the area in which organisational activity is most visible - and where the most urgent inequality remains.

- Almost all survey respondents reported taking action to increase the representation of women in leadership positions.
- Initiatives include leadership development, mentoring, governance reforms, education, coaching programmes and support for women referees, officials and umpires.
- The report demonstrates an increasingly strong business and governance case for women's leadership and examples of environments in which women can thrive.
- Nevertheless, women remain under-represented across decision-making, coaching and officiating roles, and respondents identify leadership inequality as the most urgent priority for action.
- Future progress depends on structural change in recruitment, progression, retention, reward and organisational culture, not only on individual development programmes.

6.1 Leadership and Decision-Making

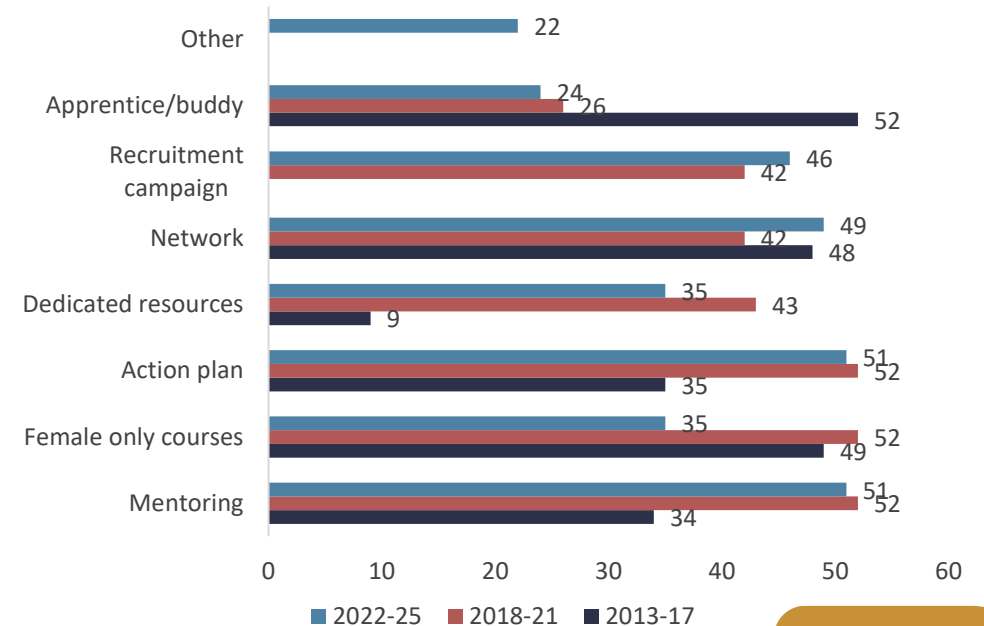
The survey findings indicate an increase in the percentage of organisations confirming that they have taken actions to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, with almost all respondents (96%) taking actions.

Figure 4: Actions to increase the representation of women in leadership positions (n=51)



Many of the respondents to the survey indicated that they had taken specific actions to enable more women to enter leadership positions. The majority of these actions had been taken at the national level and included targeted training, quotas, networks and some constitutional change.

Figure 5: Interventions to enable more women leaders (n=37)



GOOD PRACTICES TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN COACHES IN INTERNATIONAL FEDERATIONS

OCTOBER 2025

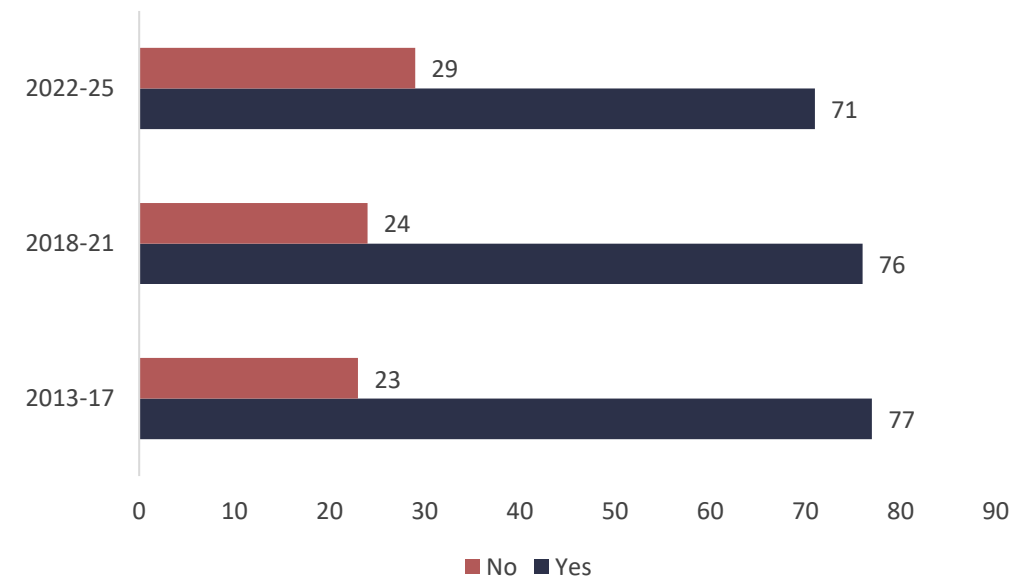


6.2

Coaches and instructors

Respondents to the survey indicated that a similar percentage of organisations have taken actions to address the under-representation of women in positions as coaches or instructors as identified in the previous Reports.

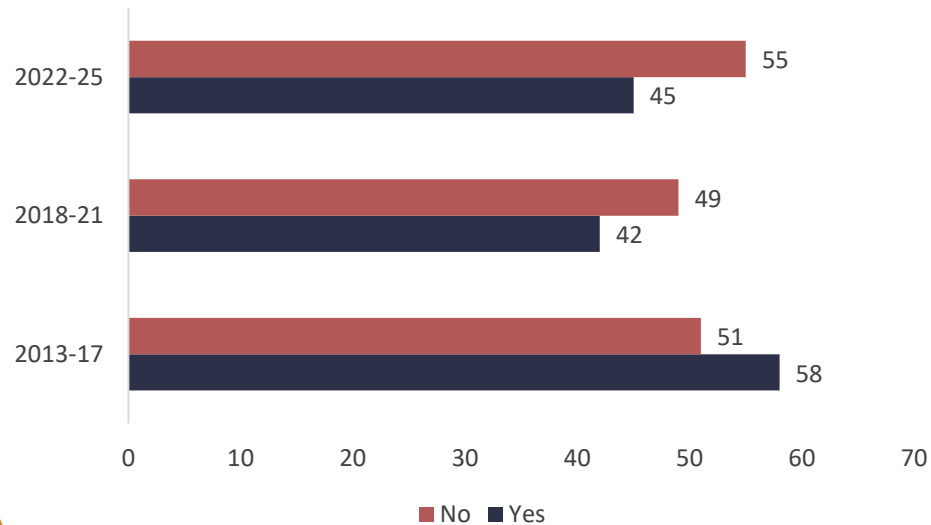
Figure 6: Actions to increase girls/women coaches or instructors (n=52)



6.3 Referees, Officials, Judges and Umpires

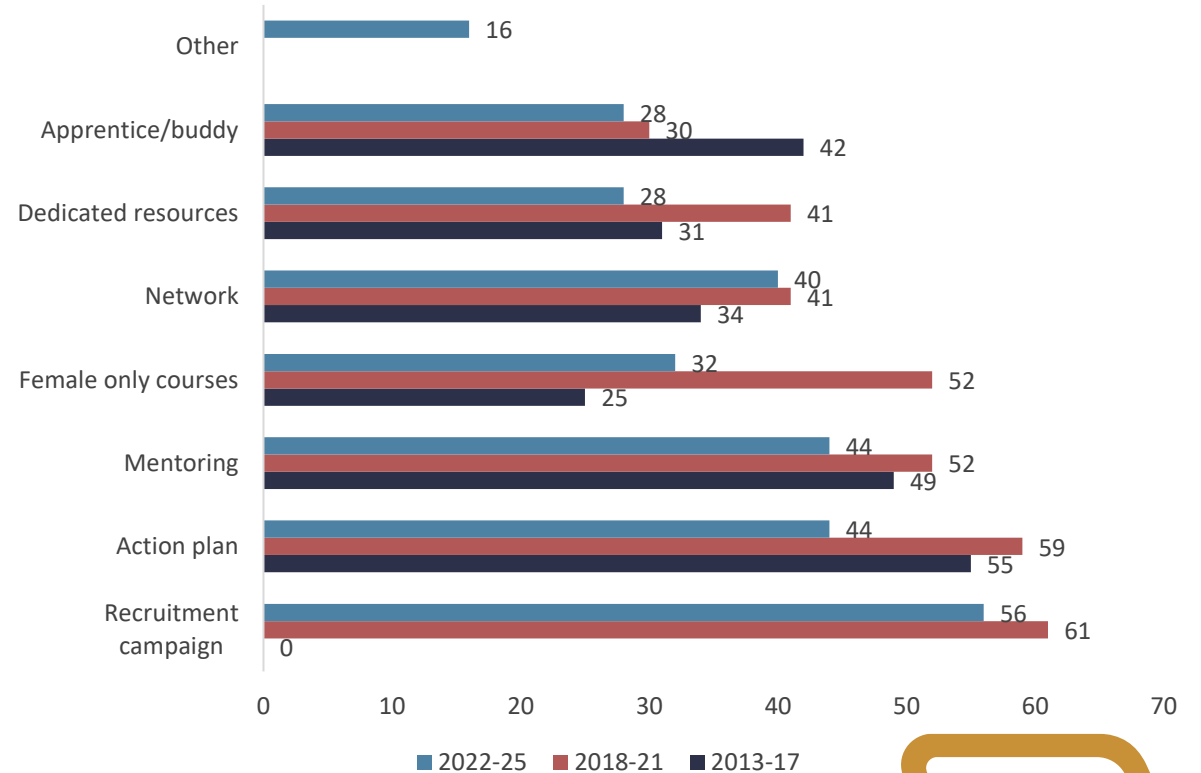
There is a small increase in the percentage of respondents taking actions to increase the number of women and girls as referees and officials, although this is lower than the percentage indicated in the 2018 Progress Report (45% compared to 58% in 2018).

Figure 7: Actions to increase girls/women as referees and officials (n=50)



Of those organisations taking actions, the main interventions were recruitment campaigns, action plans, mentoring, and networking opportunities.

Figure 8: Interventions to increase girls/women as referees and officials (n=25)



6.4 Anita White Fund

In addition to the actions of the signatories to the Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration, in 2024, the IWG UK established the Anita White Fund. The Anita White Fund is a legacy of the Anita White Foundation and consists of two sets of awards - The Anita White Catalyst Grant and The Cath Sweet Award.

The **Anita White Catalyst Grant (AWCG)** was made available to enable women who have successfully completed leadership programmes to advance the women and sport movement in their countries, regions or organisations. This fund honours Dr Anita White's leadership of the international women and sport movement and her role in establishing the IWG.

The **Cath Sweet Award (CSA)** supported women to deliver programmes that promote social inclusion through sport and prioritised activities with a focus on disability. This fund was supported by UK Sport in memory of Cath and her work as a former UK Sport employee to use sport to deliver positive social impact around the world.

The IWG received 139 applications for funding from 53 different countries and supported 16 projects in 13 different countries. Full details of the Fund and its impact can be found in the AWF Impact Report .



7.0 Participation in physical activity and sport

The evidence for the benefits of participation in physical activity and sport is compelling. Women and girls who take part in sport are likely to be more confident, have better long-term health, stay in school longer, have improved leadership skills, and get better jobs.

Participation remains uneven, with evidence of declining organisational activity in some areas and persistent intersectional gaps.

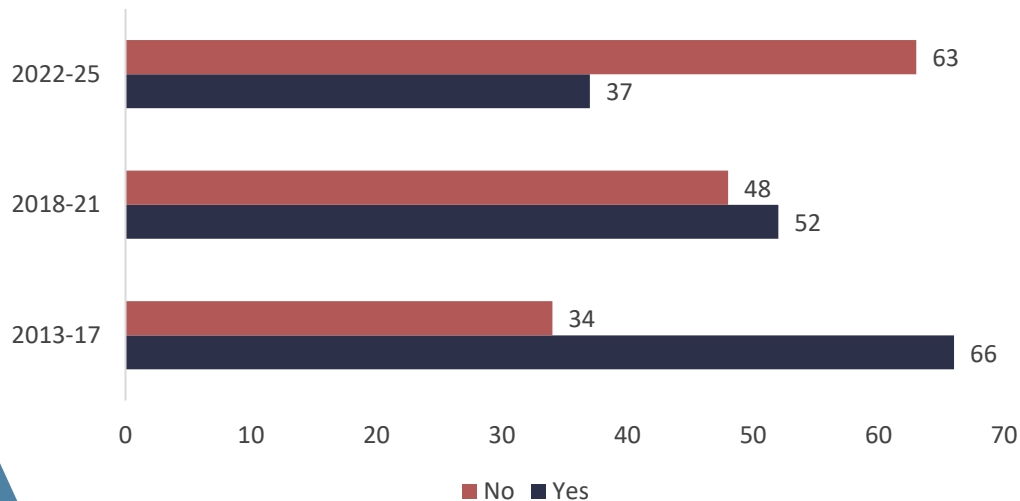
- There was a slight decrease in the proportion of organisations undertaking activities to increase opportunities for women and girls.
- More than half of respondents reported actions or specific policies for transgender people and/or people with differences of sexual development.
- Fewer than one-third had taken specific action or provided support for women during motherhood, women from Indigenous communities, or women with disabilities.



7.1 Participation in schools

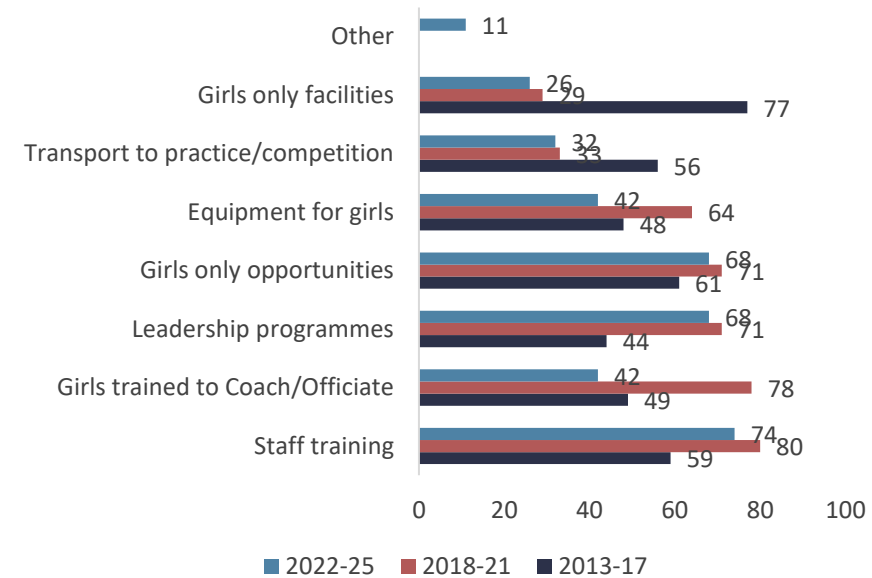
There has been a decrease in the percentage of organisations indicating that they are taking actions to improve physical activity for girls in schools since the 2018 and 2022 Progress Reports, with just over one-third of respondents saying that they did take such actions.

Figure 9: Organisations taking actions to improve physical activity for girls in schools (n=53)



Where organisations are taking actions, the main activities relate to staff training, leadership programmes, and girls-only opportunities. There has been a decrease in the percentage offering opportunities for girls to train to coach/officiate or be offered equipment or transport. However, it should be noted that this is based on only 19 responses, in contrast to 45 responses in the 2022 survey.

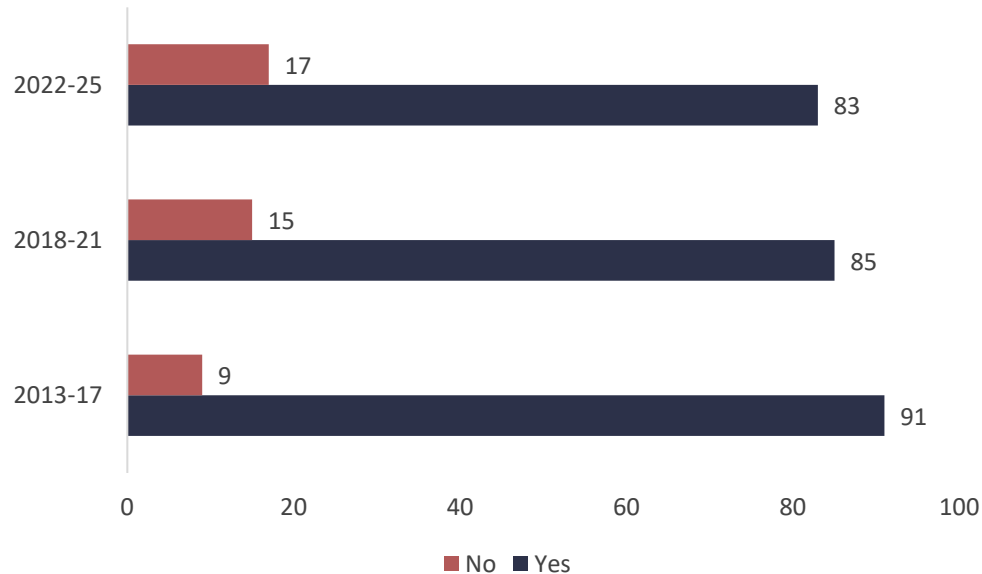
Figure 10: Interventions to increase girls' opportunities for Physical activity in schools (n=19)



7.2 General participation of women and girls

There has been a very slight decrease in the percentage of respondents stating that they undertook actions to increase women and girls' participation in sport since the 2022 IWG Progress Report.

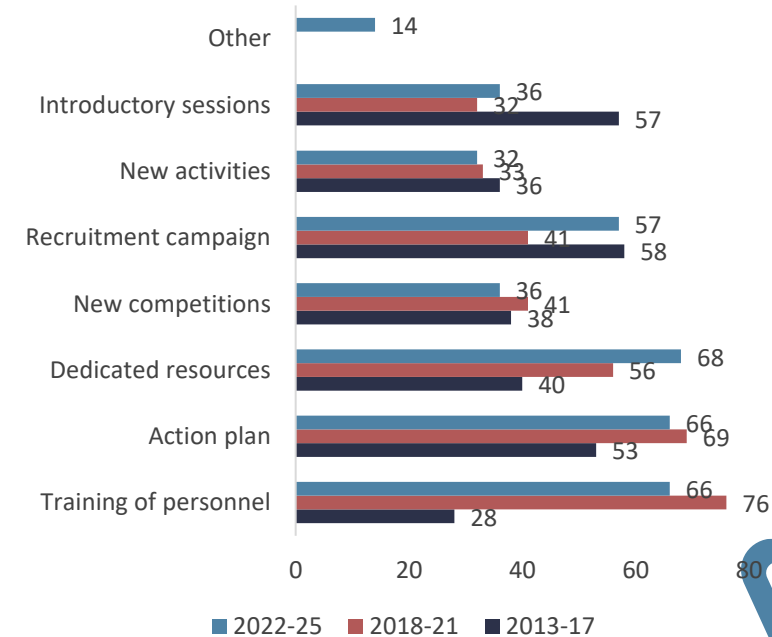
Figure 11: Organisations taking actions to increase girls and women's participation in sport (n=53)



All of the respondents from Africa and the Americas were taking such actions, and more than 80% of the Sports Federations, Olympic and Paralympic Committees, and Women and Sport Organisations.

The main interventions that were identified included action plans and training, with a notable increase in the proportion offering dedicated resources to women and girls. Less common were new or introductory activities.

Figure 12: Interventions to Increase Girls and Women's Participation in Sport and Physical Activity (n=44)

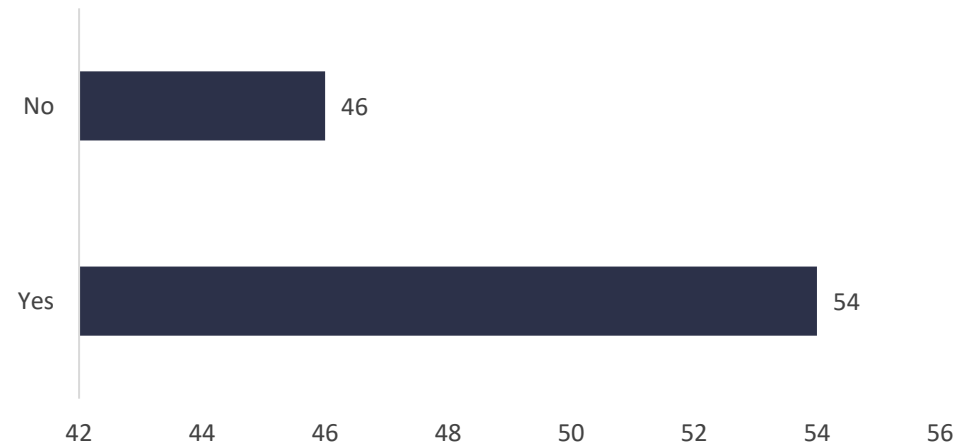


The 2022 IWG Progress Report identified as emergent issues, the significance of gender identity, and the experiences of those in indigenous/colonised communities, motherhood, and women with disabilities. The report recommended that future progress reports researched *“the intersectional influences present in culture, religion and politics”*.

This was a focus of the 2026 Progress Report, which found that more than half (54%) respondents had taken actions or introduced specific policies for people who are transgender and/or with differences of sexual development.

However, less than a third of respondents had taken specific actions or provided support for women during motherhood, from indigenous communities, or with disabilities.

Figure 13: Organisations Taking Actions for People Who are Transgender and/or Have Differences of Sexual Development (n=51)



8.0 High Performance Sport

Organisational action is increasing, but equality has not yet been achieved in the high-performance environment.

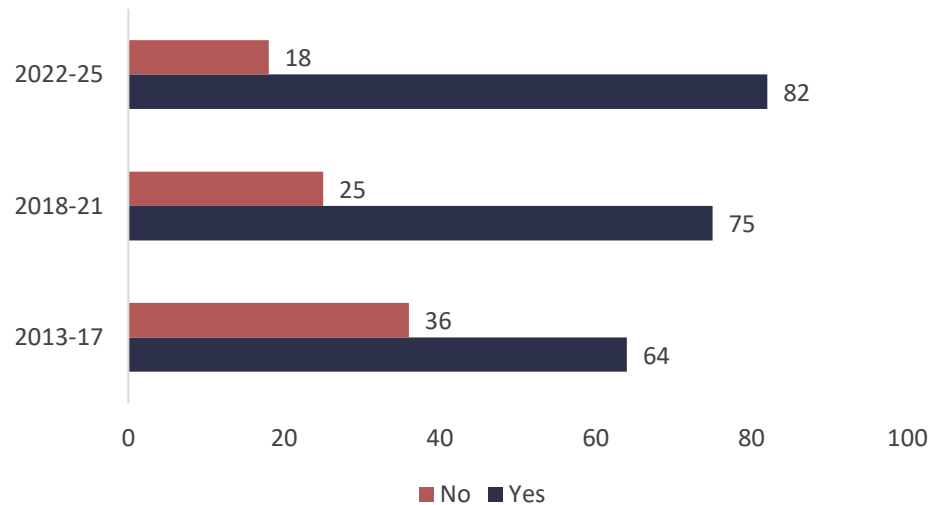
- More organisations reported action to improve the experiences of women at elite level than in the previous two Progress Reports.
- Initiatives include valuing women as athletes, coaches and officials, creating safer high-performance environments and supporting career development without prejudice or barriers.
- Just over one-third of respondents reported action to prepare women athletes for retirement from elite sport.
- Despite progress, women remain under-represented as athletes, coaches and leaders and continue to experience less investment and fewer career opportunities than men.
- Pregnancy, motherhood, career transition and long-term athlete support remain areas requiring more systematic provision.



8.1 Elite-level system

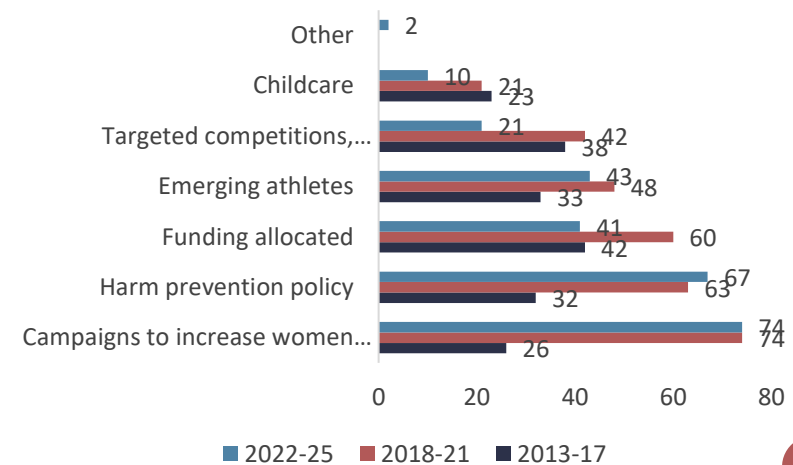
The percentage of organisations responding to the survey who are taking actions to improve the experiences for women taking part in sport at the elite level has increased since the previous two Progress Reports to 82%.

Figure 14: Organisations Taking Actions to Improve the Experience for Women Elite Level Athletes (n=52)



The main interventions that were identified were campaigns to increase women as coaches and leaders, and harm prevention policies. There is, however, a decrease in the percentage of respondents indicating that they are allocating funding, or having targeted competitions, rewards and sponsorship, when compared to the previous Progress Report.

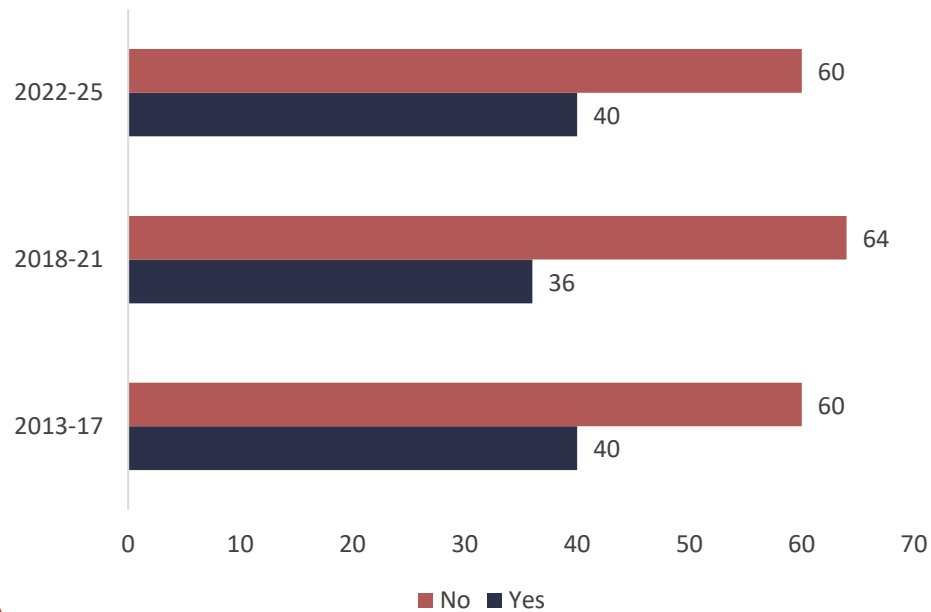
Figure 15: Interventions to Improve the Situation for Female Elite Level Athletes (n=42)



8.2 Retiring from elite-level sport

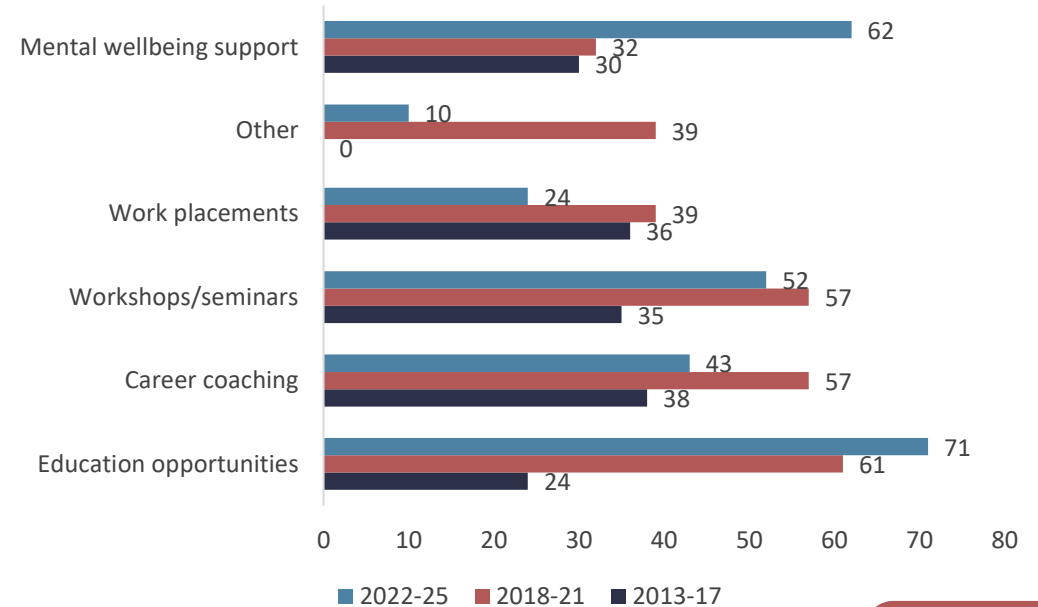
The percentage of organisations indicating that they have taken actions to prepare women athletes for retirement from elite level sport is consistent with the previous two Progress Reports at just over one-third of the respondents.

Figure 16: Organisations Taking Actions to Prepare Women Athletes for Retirement from Elite Level Sport (n=53)



As with the 2022 Progress Report, the number of respondents indicating which interventions they had taken was small (21 responses in 2026). The main interventions taken were offering educational opportunities, with a notable increase in mental wellbeing support. There was, however, a decrease in the percentage offering work placements or career coaching.

Figure 17: Interventions to Prepare Women Athletes for Retirement from Elite Level Sport (n=21)



9.0 Health and Wellbeing

Awareness of women's health, safety and well-being in sport is increasing, but the evidence base and implementation remain inconsistent.

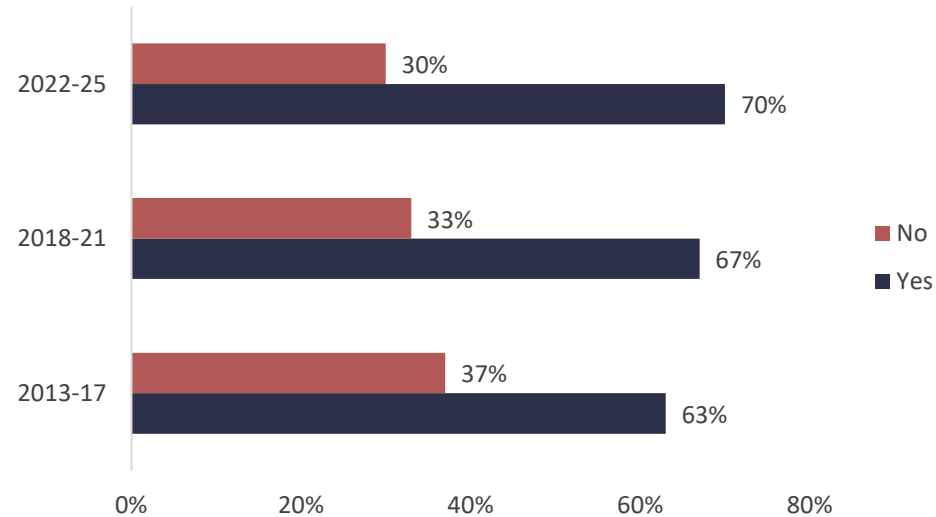
- The report identifies growing attention to injury risk, gender-based violence and eating disorders among women and girls in sport.
- More respondents reported actions to prevent gender-based violence and to protect female athletes from developing eating disorders.
- Interventions include nutrition education, discussion of body image and eating disorders, access to nutritionists and engagement with athletes' support networks.
- Many organisations still report no action because the issue has not been considered, falls outside organisational scope, or lacks resources.
- Greater research and systematic policy implementation are required to ensure safe and healthy environments throughout the sport and physical-activity ecosystem.



9.1 Gender-based violence

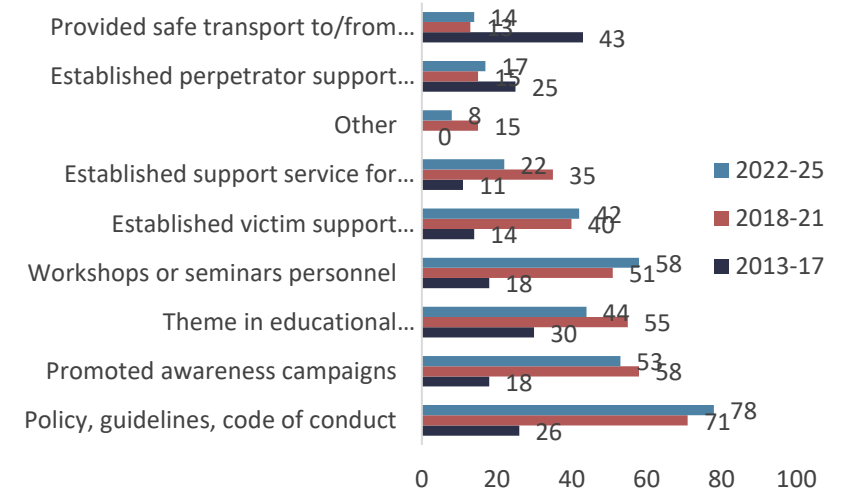
The percentage of respondents indicating they were had taken actions to prevent gender-based violence in sport has increased slightly since the previous report to 70%.

Figure 18: Organisations Taking Actions to Prevent Gender-Based Violence (n=51)



Of the organisations taking actions to prevent gender-based violence, the majority had developed policies and guidelines, were promoting awareness campaigns, or were offering workshops and seminars.

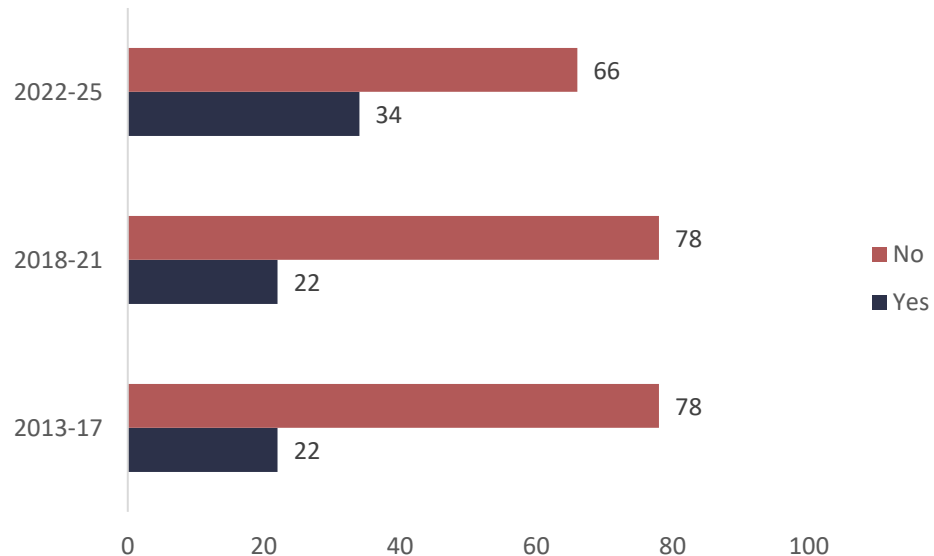
Figure 19: Interventions to Prevent Gender-Based Violence (n=36)



9.2 Eating disorders

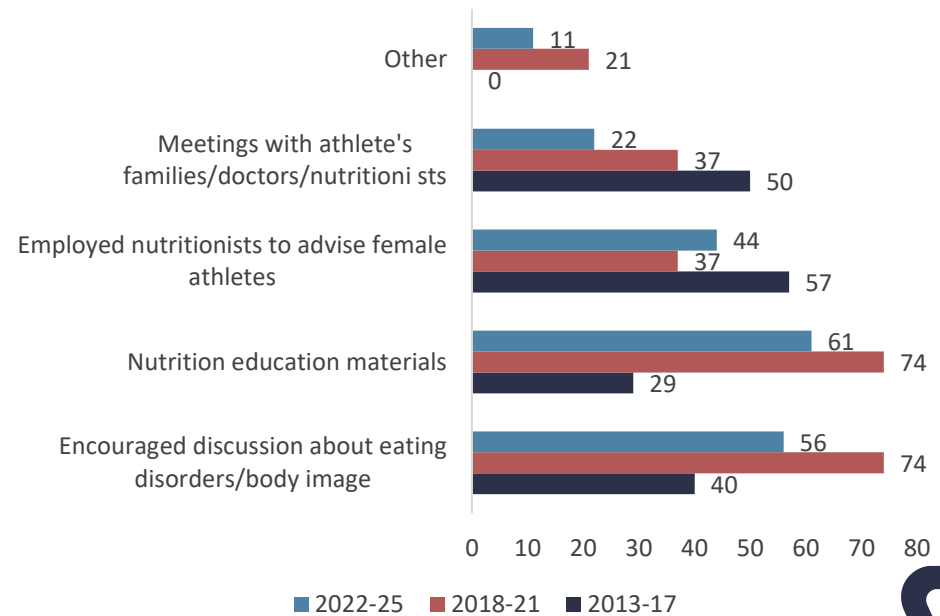
There was a slight increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that they had taken actions to protect female athletes from developing eating disorders, although this was based on only 18 responses in contrast to 86 respondents to this question in 2022.

Figure 20: Organisations Taking Actions to Protect Female Athletes from Developing Eating Disorders (n=18)



Of the respondents who had developed interventions, there was a small increase in the employment of nutritionists, with the majority indicating they had provided nutrition education materials and encouraged discussions on the topic.

Figure 21: Interventions to Protect Female Athletes from Developing Eating Disorders (n=18)



10.0 Family-Friendly Places

Facilities are becoming more gender-responsive, but childcare remains a significant and persistent weakness.

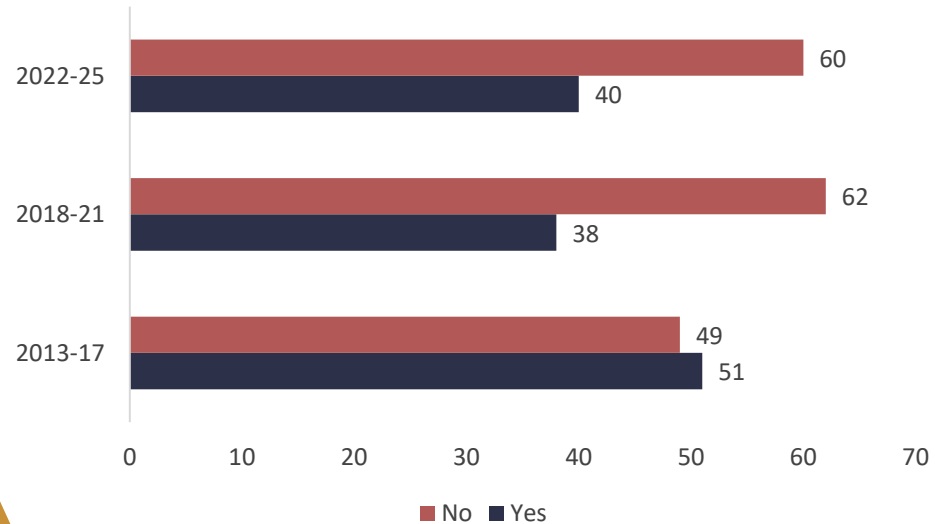
- There was a very small increase in organisations taking action to ensure facilities are appropriate for women and girls.
- Interventions include women-only provision, safe and appropriate spaces, and changes to facility design and management.
- The proportion of organisations taking action to ensure childcare is available has decreased since childcare was first raised as a specific issue in the 2014 Progress Report.
- Where childcare is provided, interventions include safe play spaces, equipment, resources and staff or volunteers to supervise children.
- Lack of budget and resources is a major constraint, reinforcing the need for governments and commercial funders to apply a gender lens to investment in sports facilities.



10.1 Facilities and safe environments

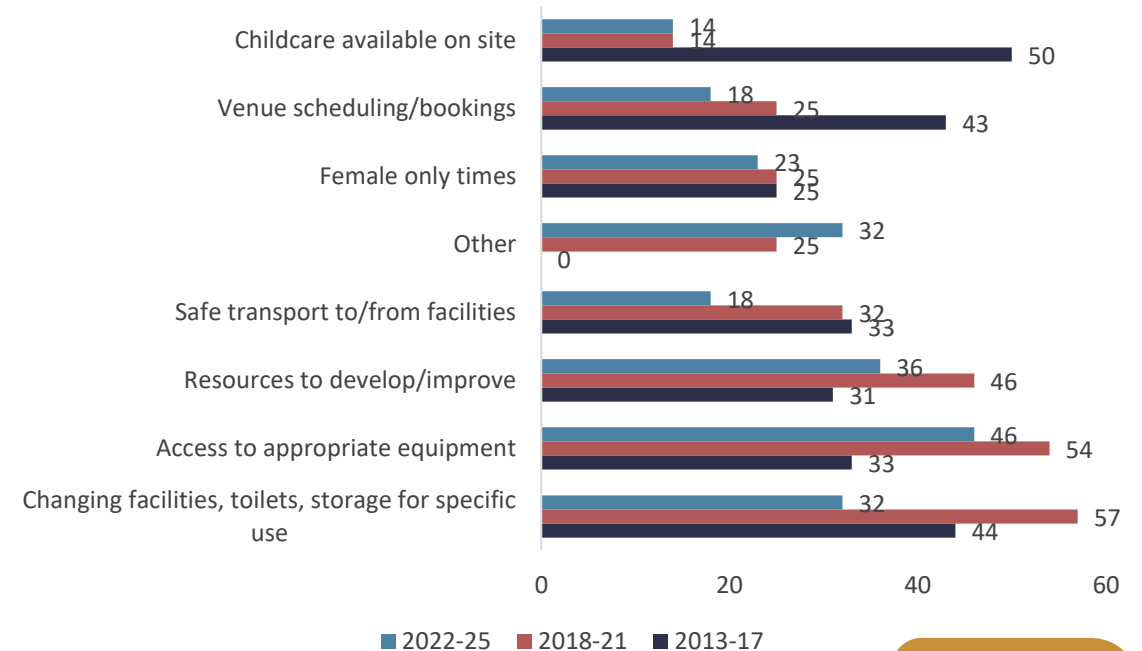
There was a very slight increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that they had taken actions to ensure facilities are appropriate for women and girls, but this was still only 40% of the total responses.

Figure 22: Organisations Taking Actions to Ensure Facilities are Appropriate for Girls and Women (n=51)



There was also a decline in the percentage of responses to most of the different types of interventions, with the highest proportion of responses indicating access to appropriate equipment.

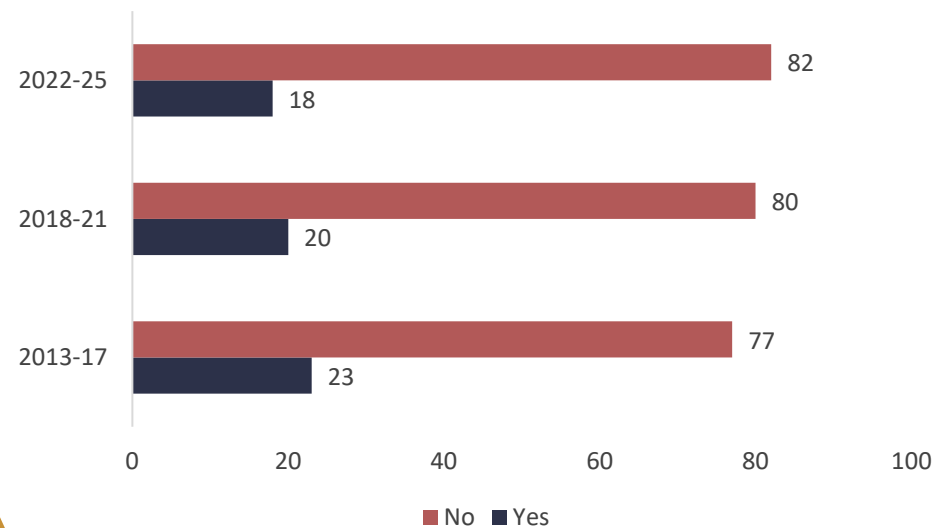
Figure 23: Interventions to Ensure Facilities are Appropriate for Girls and Women (n=22)



10.2 Childcare

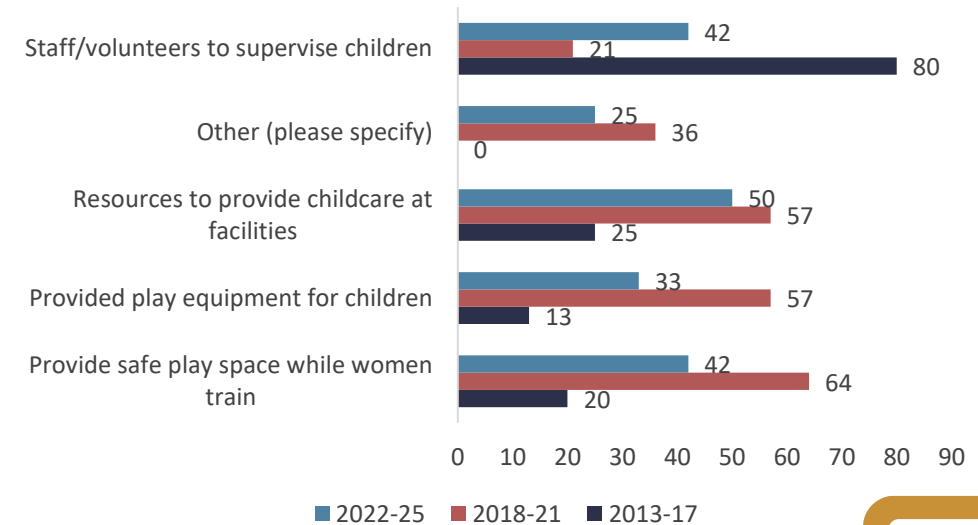
The issue of the provision of childcare was first identified in the 20-year IWG Progress Report published in 2014. Since then, there has been a decrease in the percentage of organisations indicating that they have taken actions to ensure childcare is provided in the 2018, 2022, and now the 2026 surveys.

Figure 24: Organisations Taking Actions to Ensure Childcare is Provided (n=50)



Of the few organisations who have introduced interventions to provide childcare, these included the provision of safe play spaces, resources and equipment, and supervision of children.

Figure 25: Interventions to Ensure Childcare is Provided (n=12)



11.0 Media

Media is one of the clearest areas of positive movement, with growing activity to increase both visibility and the quality of representation.

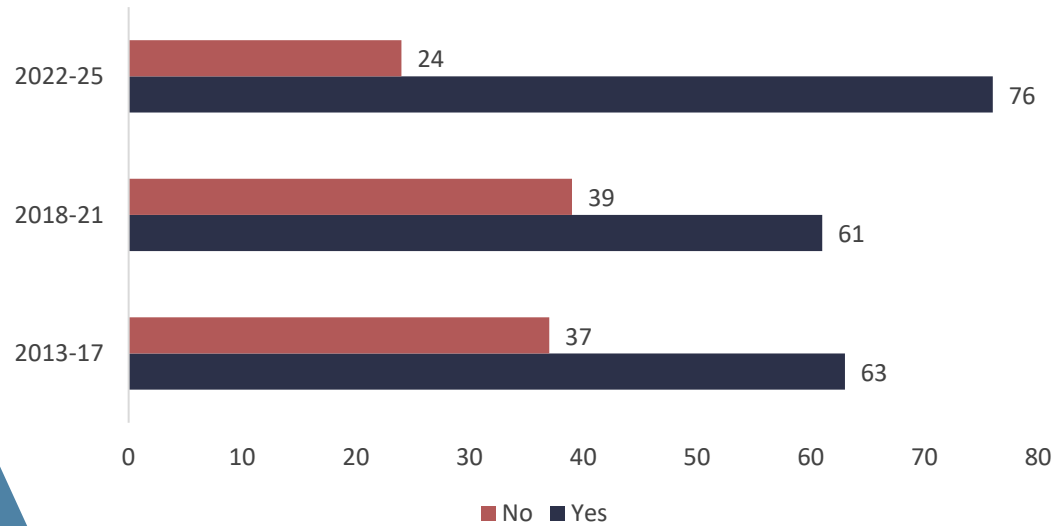
- A notable increase was reported in actions to increase media coverage of women's sport.
- More organisations are also working to improve how women and girls are portrayed, with an emphasis on strength, skills and sporting achievement rather than stereotypes.
- Social and digital media are increasingly central to visibility, storytelling and audience development.
- This growth creates a parallel need for safe, responsible and gender-sensitive reporting and online environments.
- Investment and commercial development are becoming increasingly connected to media visibility.



11.1 Media coverage

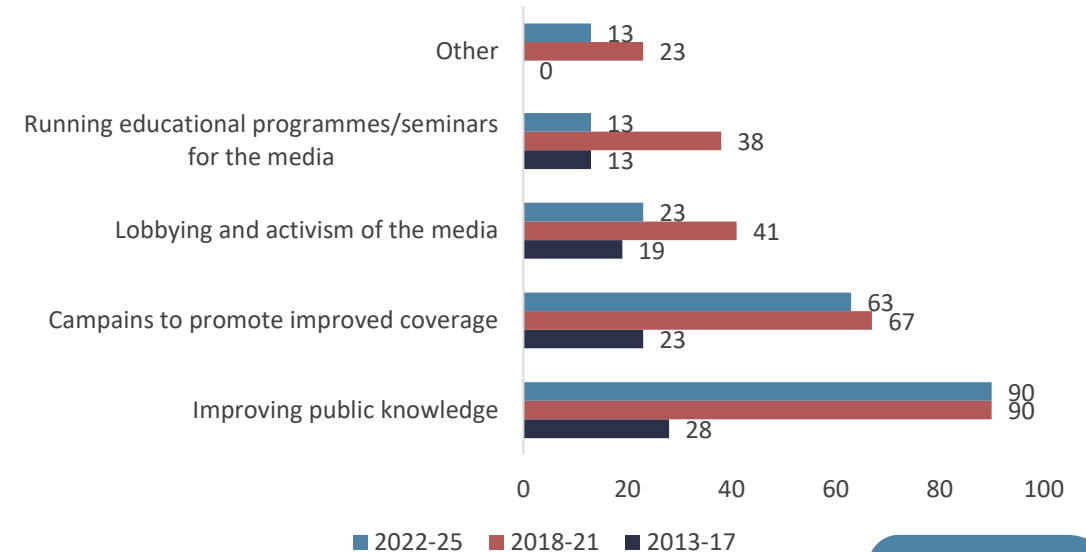
There was a notable increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that they had taken actions to increase media coverage of women's sport, with more than three-quarters stating that they did so. It is likely that much of this is related to the growth of social and digital media since previous Progress Reports.

Figure 26: Organisations Taking Actions to Increase Media Coverage of Women's Sport (n=51)



Of the organisations who had interventions to increase media coverage of women's sport, these were primarily to improve public knowledge, and campaigns to promote improved coverage. There is also increasing awareness of the business case for investment in women's sport as media coverage increases in some regions, as this provides opportunities to develop sport itself, and also offers a return on investment for commercial partners.

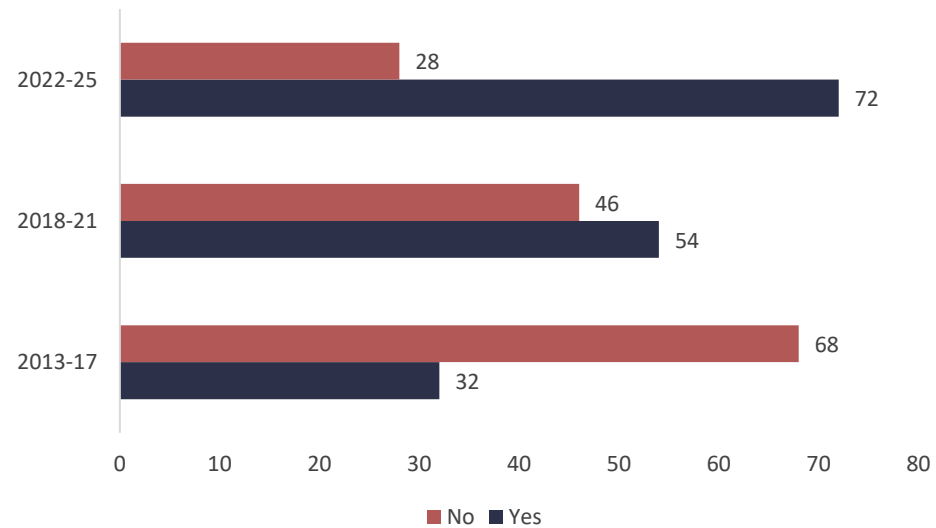
Figure 27: Interventions to Increase Media Coverage of Women's Sport (n=41)



11.2 Portrayal in the media

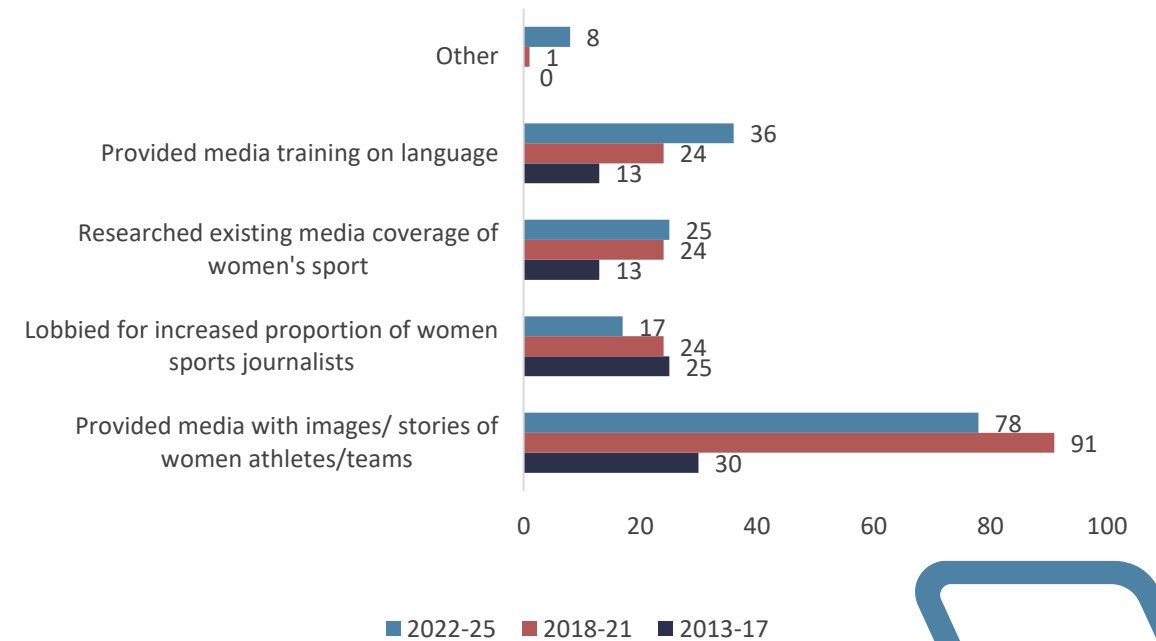
In addition to the amount of media coverage, there was also an increase in the percentage of organisations that had taken actions to improve the media portrayal of female athletes

Figure 28: Organisations Taking Actions to Improve Media Portrayal of Female Athletes (n=51)



The main interventions to improve media portrayal of females in sport included providing media stories of women athletes and teams and also providing media training.

Figure 29: Interventions to Improve Media Portrayal of Female Athletes (n=36)



12.0 A Summary of Action

The overall picture is one of progress without parity: substantial activity is evident, but structural inequalities remain entrenched.

- Positive change is visible in policy development, leadership initiatives, high-performance sport, health and safety, and media coverage.
- The main reasons organisations give for inaction are lack of resources, the issue not being a current priority, or the topic falling outside organisational scope.
- Particularly under-developed areas include gender-equity research, support during motherhood, staffed childcare, and targeted provision for Indigenous women and women with disabilities.
- Leadership inequality, unequal resources, gender stereotyping and discrimination continue to cut across multiple sections of the report.
- The evidence points toward the need to move from individual initiatives to sustained, measurable and adequately resourced systemic change.



12.1 Monitoring progress

The survey respondents indicated that the priority issues for most urgent attention are:

- Under-representation in decision-making positions
- Under-representation as coaches and instructors
- Discrimination/ gender bias

The main barriers to gender equity in and through sport were identified as the unequal distribution of resources and budgets, gender stereotypes, cultural norms and constraints. The actions that organisations were taking to achieve equity were policies, governance reforms, campaigns, dedicated budgets, research and mentoring.



12.2 Strategies, investment and evaluation

The findings from the survey demonstrated an increase in the percentage of respondent organisations with a gender equity policy and/or action plan, as well as an increase in organisations undertaking research focused on females in sport and physical activity or applying a gender lens in their data collection.

The number of respondents to these questions were small and, despite the increase, it remains the case that less than half of the survey respondents are commissioning or undertaking research into gender equity in and through sport. This will continue to be important in order to retain an evidence base to inform and track the impact of policies, projects and programmes.

12.3 Leadership – Decision Makers, Coaches, Officials

Gender equity in sport leadership roles has consistently been identified as a priority issue in IWG Progress Reports. The survey findings indicate an increase in the percentage of organisations confirming that they have taken actions to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, with almost all respondents taking actions.

The organisations addressing this issue includes those promoting the business case for women in leadership roles, creating environments where women thrive as athletes and coaches, with a smaller number taking actions to increase women and girls as referees and officials.



12.4 Participation

In this section, it was noted that there has been a decrease in the percentage of organisations indicating that they are taking actions to improve physical activity for girls in schools since the 2018 and 2022 Progress Reports, including offering opportunities for girls to train to coach/officiate, or be offered equipment or transport.

The 2022 IWG Progress Report identified as emergent issues, the need to prioritise the planning, resourcing and implementation of programmes that target those least likely to be able to access the benefits of engaging in sport and physical activity. In particular, the Report highlighted the significance of gender identity, and the experiences of those in indigenous/colonised communities, motherhood, and women with disabilities. The 2026 Progress Report found that more than half of the respondents had taken actions or introduced specific policies for people who are transgender and/or with differences of sexual development, but that less than a third of respondents had taken specific actions or provided support for women during motherhood, from indigenous communities, or with disabilities.



12.5 High-performance sport

The Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration has as one of its Principles that governments and sports organisations should provide equal opportunities for women to reach their sports performance potential, while the 2022 IWG Progress Report also recommends that the high-performance sports system is structured to value women as athletes, coaches and umpires.

The percentage of organisations responding to the survey who are taking actions to improve the experiences for women taking part in sport at the elite level has increased since the previous two Progress Reports, with just over one-third of the respondents indicating that they have taken actions to prepare women athletes for retirement from elite level sport.



12.6 Health and wellbeing

The most recent IWG Progress Reports have reinforced the Principle outlined in the Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration of the need to provide *a safe and secure environment* for women and girls. This includes the provision of information and resources, with particular attention to gender-based violence and eating disorders.

The 2026 survey demonstrated an increase in the percentage of respondents indicating they had taken actions to prevent gender-based violence in sport and to protect female athletes from developing eating disorders. It continues to be a priority area for attention to raise awareness and implement relevant wellbeing policies and practice throughout the sport and physical activity ecosystem.



12.7 Female friendly spaces

The Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration proposes that: “The planning, design and management of (facilities) should appropriately and equitably meet the particular needs of women and girls in the community”. Recent IWG Progress Reports have reinforced the importance of taking a gender lens to provide safe and appropriate spaces for women and girls to participate in sport, including scheduling programmes that included women-only slots, and the provision of childcare.

While respondents to the 2026 survey demonstrated a very slight increase in the percentage that had taken actions to ensure facilities are appropriate for women and girls, there has been a decrease in the percentage of organisations indicating that they have taken actions to ensure childcare is provided since this was first raised as a specific issue in the 2014 IWG Progress Report.

12.8 Media

The portrayal of women athletes in the media, including the amount of coverage they receive, has been identified as a significant issue in IWG Progress Reports since 2014.

In the survey responses for the 2026 IWG Progress Report, there was a notable increase in the percentage of respondents indicating that they had taken actions to increase media coverage of women’s sport, as well as an increase in those taking actions to build awareness and improve the media portrayal of women and girls playing sport at all levels.



13.0 Focusing on progress

The IWG was established as an outcome of the first officially recognised World Conference on Women and Sport in 1994 and has been hosted by a Secretariat based in a different country every four years since then, with quadrennial World Conferences. The first conference was themed The Challenge of Change, and each subsequent conference until 2022 also had a theme of 'Change'². The IWG UK Secretariat 2022-2026 had the theme 'Share The Change' in its bid to host IWG.

1994 – Brighton, UK: *Women's Sport and the Challenge of **Change***

1998 – Windhoek, Namibia: *Reaching out for **Change***

2002 – Montreal, Canada: *Investing in **Change***

2006 – Kumamoto, Japan: *Participating in **Change***

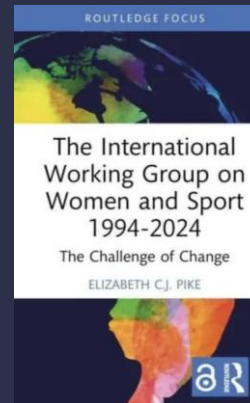
2010 – Sydney, Australia: *Women: Play, Think, **Change***

2014 – Helsinki, Finland: *Lead the **Change**, Be the **Change***

2018 – Gaborone, Botswana: *Determine the Future, Be Part of the **Change***

2022 – Auckland, New Zealand: ***Change** Inspires **Change***

2026 – Birmingham, UK: ***Beyond The Breakthrough***



In addition to hosting the IWG World Conference/Global Summit, each Secretariat also produces a quadrennial report on progress in the international women and sport movement. The 2026 IWG Progress Report has outlined what 'Change' has occurred globally based on a desk-based exercise indicating which organisations have gender equity in sport as a strategic priority, and what activities have been undertaken by signatories of the IWG's Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration.

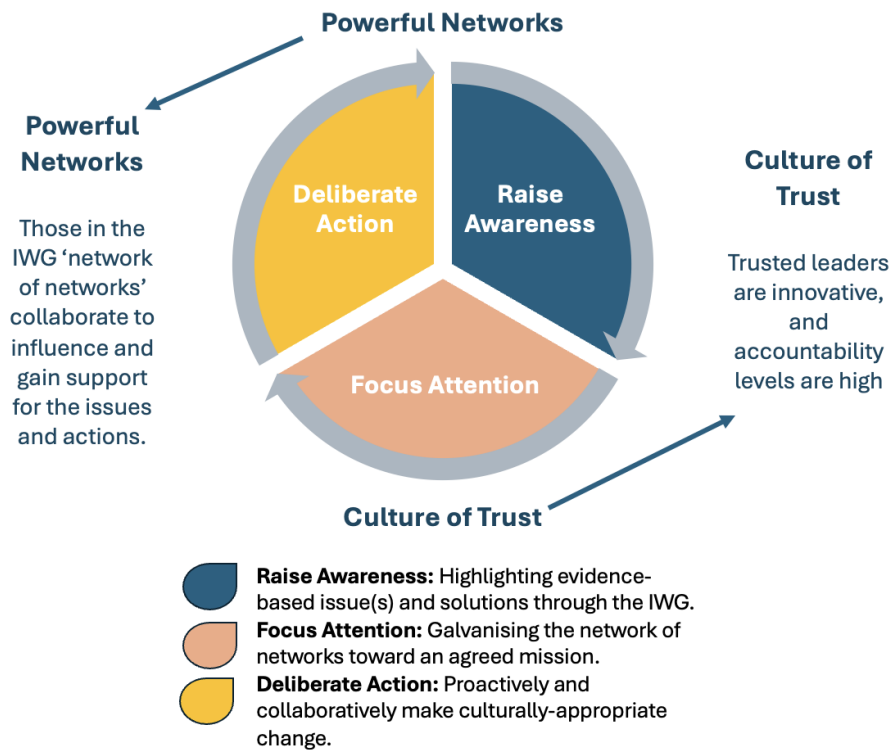
² Pike, E. (2024) The International Working Group on Women and Sport: The Challenge of Change. London: Routledge.



The findings in this Progress Report demonstrate significant positive change in many areas, often due to the global collaborative approach towards gender equality in sport. However, there remain persistent inequities in some geographical regions and for women from particular social groups, as well as in leadership positions, visibility, and safety.

These findings provide the foundations of a **Framework for Change**³ to inform future IWG Secretariats and signatories of the IWG's Brighton Plus Helsinki 2014 Declaration. This Framework for Change follows the argument that real change will only be possible if a different, feminist, approach for gender equity in sport is taken to understand and build a sporting system that enables people of all genders to lead, govern and thrive in a global sporting context. Fundamental to this are the powerful networks driving the change, and a culture of trust underpinning actions.

Figure 30: Framework for Change



This 2026 IWG Progress Report has provided evidence and examples of the progress that has been made in the international women and sport movement, along with persistent and new challenges to gender equity in and through sport.

In order for there to be the transformative and culturally-sensitive change for more equitable, inclusive sport in the future, the following principles are worthy of consideration:

- Improving access and fairness at all levels of sport participation and performance
- Scaling the experience to those groups least able to gain the benefits of sport
- Fostering an ethos of integrity and safety
- Honouring tradition while embracing innovation
- Monitoring and reporting on issues and progress
- Collaborating with stakeholders who hold a diversity of experiences, worldviews, life circumstances and biographies⁴.

³ Booth, J. and Pike, E. (2024). IWG Report: Frameworks for Change. University of Hertfordshire

⁴ Pike, E. (2025). *Rethinking Sport and Society*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing

Report Authors

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Suggested Citation:

Pike, E., Bottoms, L., Baker, L., Booth, J. (2026). *From Auckland to Birmingham: IWG Progress Report 2022-2026 - Key Insights*. University of Hertfordshire.

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