

What are the impacts of gender inequality in sport?

There are many big impacts of gender inequality in sports across all codes around the world from single athletes to big sports teams. The most talked about impact is the pay gap between female and male athletes. Believe it or not the gender pay gap is actually bigger than it has ever been since they started reporting the gender pay gap statistics. Another example of the pay gap is between NBA and the women's team, the WNBA players. The average salary for WNBA players is 110 times less than the average male NBA player. The gender pay gap is an issue at management level also, with the "gender pay gap between male and female chief executives is nearly 50 per cent".

A second really big gender inequality issue in sports is media coverage. Unfortunately, female athletes receive way less coverage compared to male athletes which is not helping equalise between men and women in sports. Women often receive less media coverage even when the women athletes' achievements outshine those of male athletes. A report undertaken by Isentia for Sport New Zealand in 2020 explored media and gender. The study looked at media reporting of sports during the period July 2019 to February 2020. It included media sources Stuff, NZME, Newshub, TVNZ, Sky, and others. The study found that women's sports accounted for 15 per cent of all sports coverage. While this is low, it is much higher to compared to other countries, including Australia at seven per cent (2018 finding) and USA at five per cent (2019 finding). It is estimated that women's sport accounts for four per cent of all sports covered in the media, globally. In addition to being less visible in the media, research has also shown that when women athletes are reported on, the coverage differs in nature to coverage for male athletes. The study by Isentia found that photos of women are more likely to show women athletes photographed with others (peers, coaches or supporters), rather than by themselves and with a higher percent of photos showing emotion or action shots, compared to photos of male athletes. If we had gender equality in sports we wouldn't expect to see any difference in how athletes of different genders are reported.

Gender inequality matters because it impacts females' participation in sports, even recreational or social exercise. Sports are, and are perceived to be, less accessible to females. For example, sports covered in the media portrayed as "male sports" may not feel accessible to females, even if they are sports open to female players also. When females see male counterparts being paid more and portrayed more in the media, this can impact the female's sense of value or worth and create a feeling that they are not "as good" or "as worthy" as males playing the same sports, which creates a barrier to participation. And even if females still choose to participate in these sports, they do so feeling as though their success isn't valued (as much) or that their success is capped. For these reasons, it matters that we continue to fight for equality in sports.

Yale University's women rowers stripped to protest the lack of proper showers for them to use after practice. The team took their tops off and had the words "Title IX" drawn across them. Multiple newspapers published the story and within two weeks the female rowers had a new locker room with showers. The fact women had to go to the depth of this to get equal locker rooms really shows the difference now as men and women both have locker rooms with great facilities these days compared to back then when women didn't even have showers to use after rowing practice.

Gender inequality is slowly improving in sports like there are little things they are changing to make it more equal. Some examples of this are for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic games they made a rule which meant each country was encouraged to have a male and female athlete holding their flag which resulted with 91 per cent of countries doing this. Another example showing the Olympics committee is committed to equalising the opportunities between male and female athletes is that they opened up the opportunity to female athletes by allowing them to participate in all sporting codes that male athletes were able to compete in.

I discussed the gender pay gap and differences in media reporting above. While these remain issues, there has been some movement in these areas. Major tournaments including Wimbledon and the US Open have made efforts to equalise prize money for male and female players. This

acknowledges that both men and women put in the same amount of skill, dedication and effort to be at the top level of their sport. This equality is fair and shows all athletes that they are valued, irrespective of gender. I mentioned the research Isentia did for Sport New Zealand, that found that in 2020 15 percent of sports media coverage was of female sports. This 15 percent was an increase from 11 per cent found in a study by Toni Bruce in 2011. While it is positive that this is moving in the right direction, we still have a long way to go. I personally believe that as New Zealanders we should feel embarrassed that there is still such a significant gap. This isn't an issue that only affects our top athletes, I can now see that it affects all of us, and will continue to affect future generations also, so we need to do better.



This photo is from 1967 and it shows the difference in women running marathons compared to 2024 as they use to get pushed out of the way by male runners.



In this photo from 2024 this girl is completing a marathon with support from everyone and not having to worry about getting pushed out of the way.

The student also provided a reference list.