

**UN Questionnaire on Violence against Women and Girls in Sport**

**Submission of Ireland, April 2024**

**Question 1:**

**The Irish Sports Monitor**

In 2022, the Irish Sports Monitor outlined that women (26%) were more likely than men (21%) to report having experienced verbal or physical harassment when exercising. Among those who experienced harassment during sport, exercise, or walking, 39% of women reported making changes to their activity such as when or where they participated. Only 17% of men reported the same.10% of men and women stopped participating in sport altogether after these experiences. Before going for a walk or jog, females are ~50% more likely to think carefully about where they will be going, feel safer when walking or jogging with other people, try to avoid going for walks or jogs after dark, and tell someone where they are going before they go, (ISM 2022).

**Sport Ireland Funded Research**

In 2023, Rowing Ireland found that the experiences of women differ greatly from men at club level. Funded by Sport Ireland, the research highlighted the fact that female coaches often feel marginalised and are not experiencing the same club culture as their male counterparts. 59% of female coaches feel unacceptable behaviour is not tackled in their club as opposed to 39% of male coaches. As to whether the presence of women was marginalised or undervalued within the club, 33% of male coaches agreed with this versus 57% of women. In addition, 44% of female coaches feel they have witnessed gender bias in their club compared to15% of male coaches. 24% of women feel that female coaches are always respected by the opposite gender whereas 55% of male coaches believe that their female peers are always respected by men.  Approximately one third (32%) of females identify that sport club management and administration is too male dominated.

**Question 2:**

**Sport Ireland Coaching Research**

In 2021, Sport Ireland released its Women in Sport Coaching Research Report. Female coaches outlined challenges and negative experiences they encountered because of their gender or age, including:

* Inferior treatment from male parents, coaches, club administrators
* Bullying for being a female coach
* Seen as less knowledgeable
* Overlooked by male peers
* Not being taken seriously
* Disrespected
* Stigma of being a female
* Having to prove themselves

**Question 3:**

**Safeguarding**

Sport Ireland’s (state authority) guiding principles and the Sport Ireland Guidance Document for Children and young people in Sport1 are underpinned by national policy and legislation in Ireland - Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 20172, and the requirements under The Children First Act 20153, ensuring that the best interests of children and young people (under 18s) are prioritised. The aim of this is to help sporting bodies to create a culture of safety that promotes the welfare of children and young people.

This guidance is for the benefit of everyone involved in children and young people’s sport. It will support National Governing Bodies and other sport and physical activity organisations for Sport in Ireland, to meet their child safeguarding and protection responsibilities.

**Question 4:**

**National Code of Conduct Template**

Sport Ireland has partnered with representatives from the Irish sports sector, including referees and officials, to develop a template for a code of conduct12 for sport in Ireland. This initiative aims to foster a culture of respect, integrity and fairness within the sporting community by addressing and eliminating abuse towards referees, officials, coaches, players, and all participants involved. The code of conduct template sets forth guidelines and principles that promote the behaviour and conduct expected from athletes, coaches, parents/guardians, supporters, referees/officials, and club members, regardless of the sporting environment.

**Question 5:**

The Sport Ireland Women in Sport Steering Committee was formed in 2019 to assist, advise, and provide guidance to Sport Ireland about its actions regarding the implementation of the Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport. The Sport Ireland Diversity and Inclusion in Sport Advisory Group, formed in 2022, advises Sport Ireland about its actions regarding the implementation of the Sport Ireland Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport, and the promotion of an inclusive sports sector in Ireland. Membership of these groups comprises a diverse range of stakeholders.

In developing the Sport Ireland Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport, including the voice and perspectives of people from diverse and underrepresented

communities, and those who advocate on their behalf, was prioritised.  An extensive consultation process was held, incorporating focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and surveys. 2275 individuals and over 150 organisations contributed to this process. The consultation provided useful and reliable insights into the experiences, challenges and barriers experienced by people from diverse communities. It informed the content and direction of the policy, which identifies 5 strategic pillars highlighting gaps and opportunities for diversity and inclusion in sport, and which guide implementation of the policy.

**Question 6:**

**The Sport Ireland Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport**

The Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport coexists alongside and complements the Sport Ireland Policy on Diversity and Inclusion in Sport, published in 2022. This Policy expresses its vision for a sport sector that celebrates diversity, promotes inclusion, and is proactive in providing opportunities for lifelong participation for everyone.

Actions to address barriers to participation in sport will take place over the life cycle of the policy implementation. These actions will be targeted at national and local levels and will be co-designed with people from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds where relevant and possible.

In response to the coaching research report, Sport Ireland created the [Women in Coaching Toolkit](https://www.sportireland.ie/coachingtoolkit). The resource provides sport organisations with tools and suggested actions to recruit, develop, support and retain more women in coaching.

**High Performance Sport**

The Sport Ireland International Carding Scheme provides funding directly to high performance athletes based on identified criteria. When making funding allocations to athletes under this Scheme, Sport Ireland solely considers performance related factors; it is free from gender, ethnicity, disability, and economic bias.

In June 2020, Sport Ireland published its Athlete Welfare Policy for High Performance Sport. Sport Ireland published this policy in advance of the Sport Ireland’s High Performance Strategy 2021-2032 to ensure the Strategy’s targets were set against a foundation of good behaviour and clear values.

It establishes the roles and responsibilities of athletes, National Governing Bodies (NGBs), and Sport Ireland in ensuring the high performance system is working towards a clear set of values.

The Policy sets out principles which shape Sport Ireland’s work within high performance sport:

* Athletes’ voices are heard and welcomed by all stakeholders within the high performance system.
* Athletes are empowered to take ownership of their journey in a system that supports them to do so.
* NGBs operate in alignment with their values, which are explicit and specific to their sport. These values are embedded in the everyday work of the NGB’s high performance system.
* Sport Ireland provides adequate resources and support to NGBs in the delivery of this policy and other strategic documents within high performance.
* Sport Ireland recognises the importance of collaboration amongst individuals and organisations involved in the athlete’s life. Sport Ireland facilitates this collaboration and fosters strong partnerships.

**Sport 4 Empowerment Programme**

Sport Ireland has developed a new “Sport 4 Empowerment” (S4E) programme as part of Ireland’s European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) Programme. This programme will develop social inclusion programmes through sport and physical activity with a focus on people at risk of social exclusion and poverty. The programme will focus on, but is not limited to: ethnic minorities, youth at risk, persons with disabilities, and persons from disadvantaged backgrounds. Women are even more marginalised within the target groups and will be a priority for this programme.

The programme will see the phased employment of newly created ESF+ Social Innovation in Sport Officer positions within Local Sport Partnerships. These officers will be responsible for the piloting and implementation of a range of new, targeted, and innovative programmes which aim to enhance the wellbeing, education, and economic prospects of participants.

**Rowing Ireland Club Culture Toolkit**

Following the research referenced at Q1, Rowing Ireland created a Club Culture Toolkit. The resource provides methods and guidelines to assist rowing clubs to improve club culture and gender equality.

**Guidance for Transgender and Non-Binary Inclusion in Sport**

Sport Ireland has recently published a Guidance Document for transgender and non-binary inclusion in sport. The Sport Ireland Guidance Document will provide information and insights to the Irish sport sector to assist with decision making and policy development for the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people in sport. The Sport Ireland Guidance Document, which is underpinned by extensive consultation carried out amongst key stakeholders, summarises relevant scientific information, international and national policy context, and practical information to support National Governing Bodies of Sport in producing their own policies in this area.

It is a matter for each individual sport and, where relevant, their international federations to develop policies and rules on participation by those who identify as male or female.

**Question 7:**

**Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport**

Women in Sport is central to the work of Sport Ireland. Since 2005, over €30m has been distributed through the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Programme to fund a wide range of initiatives delivered by NGBs, Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) and funded bodies to promote gender equality in sport.

Sport Ireland published its first Policy on Women in Sport (WIS) in 2019. Following a review of the Policy in 2023, Sport Ireland released the updated version of its [Policy on Women in Sport](https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2023-11/Sport%20Ireland%20Policy%20on%20WIS%20%282023%20Final%29.pdf) in September 2023. This policy serves as a guide for Sport Ireland’s work and investment in the area.

The policy outlines Sport Ireland’s vision for women in sport as one where women have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, while enjoying a lifelong involvement in sport. The term women covers all, including women and girls with disabilities, migrant and refugee women, and women and girls from the LGBTQ+ community, different ethnic and racial backgrounds, among others.

The Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport identifies four key areas in which current gaps or opportunities exist for women in sport; Leadership and Governance, Coaching and Officiating, Active Participation and Visibility. The Policy contains 26 actions which Sport Ireland will aim to implement and achieve over the coming years. Including the voice and perspectives of women and girls when creating any programmes or initiatives which target these groups is a key focus for Sport Ireland and its stakeholders.

The National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy (2019-2021), which was adopted by Government and launched in 2019, provides a whole-of-Government framework for identifying and addressing issues which may prevent LGBTI+ people from enjoying full equality in Irish society. A review of the Strategy is underway, which will inform the development of a successor Strategy.

The vision informing the Strategy is of a safe, fair and inclusive Ireland where people are supported to flourish and to live inclusive, healthy and fulfilling lives, whatever their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. Positive visibility and increased non-stereotypical representation of LGBTI+ identities is vital to support long-term attitudinal change. The Strategy pursues objectives under four thematic pillars providing a vision of an Ireland where LGBTI+ people are visible and included, treated equally, healthy and feel safe and supported.

The ‘visible and included’ thematic pillar aims to encourage the development of a culture of respect for human rights, equality and intercultural understanding in Ireland. Positive visibility and increased non-stereotypical representation of LGBTI+ identities is vital to support long-term attitudinal change. An objective of the Strategy is to ensure public spaces are safe and welcoming of LGBTI+ people, and that LGBTI+ people are positively visible across all sectors of society. The Strategy includes actions to highlight the positive contribution of the LGBTI+ community to Irish arts, culture and sport along with actions to ensure that cultural institutions, sporting and cultural events consciously include LGBTI+ people and themes.

**Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland**

**Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Ireland**

**Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Ireland**