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### Gender Disparities Within the Olympics

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# GENDER DISPARITIES WITHIN THE OLYMPICS

Hadley Parkinson

TSOC 165

# MEET THE DECISION MAKERS: INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE



## Meet The Team

President: Mr. Thomas Bach

105 Members

## Executive Board:

President Thomas Bach

4 Vice Presidents

10 Members



“The international Olympic Committee is an international non-governmental not-for-profit organization, in the form of an association”

The role of the IOC is to promote the Olympic values, ensure regular celebration of the games and its legacy, and is responsible for implementing policy and rules within international Olympic sports.

The history of the IOC began in 1894, when founder Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the committee, and simultaneously barred women from competing in the inaugural games.

By 1900, only 22 women competed in only 5 sports, in comparison to the 975 men, who could play any sport. (2021).

Women could not compete in every sport until 2012, and it wasn't until 2014 that the IOC began working to achieve 50% female participation. (2021). It was not until 1981 that the IOC welcomed its first two female members.

Within the IOC, women make up 33.3% of the executive board, and 37.5% of the committee members are female. Showing that while the playing field has leveled for men and women within the Olympics, the IOC itself is still behind. (2021)

# RULES & REQUIREMENTS THAT IMPACT WOMEN, TRANSGENDER, & DSD ATHLETES

The International Olympic Committee holds the responsibility of creating and upholding rules and regulations within the Olympic games. Not only that, but many of the rulings made by the IOC are followed by several smaller sports organizations (such as World Athletics), showing the power that the IOC has over the regulations of sports.

Some examples of rule developed by the IOC/World Athletics that create gender disparities include:

-Policy which once required all women to have testosterone levels under 10 nanomoles/liter and for transfeminine people to be on testosterone-suppressing medication for at least a year. However, “The IOC most recently updated its inclusion policies in 2015, and its focus on testosterone levels has trickled down to even youth sports in the United States. The IOC rolled out a new framework in March '22 to encourage moving away from testosterone-based restrictions, but its former policy has already been used as a model for so many other leagues—with devastating consequences for trans athletes.” (2022).

-Post-Partum Disqualification: Athletes argued that accommodations must be made for women who are pregnant or postpartum during the qualifying period [for the Olympic games]. (2021).

-During the Tokyo games, IOC barred athlete’s family members from traveling to Tokyo due to COVID-19. Kim Gaucher, among other female athletes, then had to choose between her third Olympics or her infant daughter whom she was still breastfeeding at the time. (2021).





# SEX TESTING & TESTOSTERONE

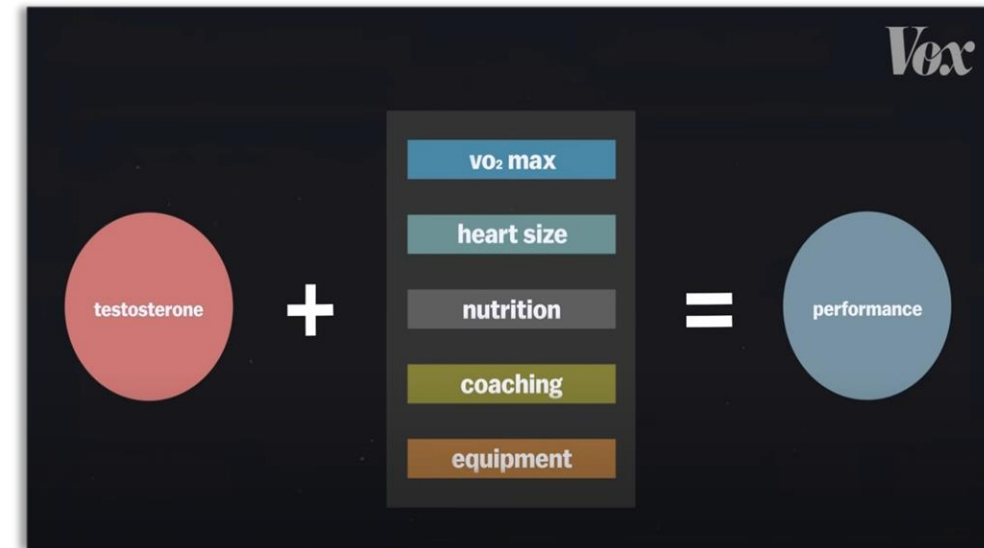
“No governing body has so tenaciously tried to determine who counts as a woman for the purpose of sports as the I.A.A.F. and the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.). Those two influential organizations have spent a half-century vigorously policing gender boundaries.” (2016).

As introduced previously, the International Olympic Committee has a history of requiring invasive procedures and testing to determine the testosterone levels and genetic makeup of female and/or trans/intersex athletes.

“In 1966 international sports officials decided they couldn’t trust individual nations to certify femininity, and instead implemented a mandatory genital check of every woman competing at international games.” (2016) “Amid complaints about the genital checks, the I.A.A.F. and the I.O.C. introduced a new “gender verification” strategy in the late ’60s: a chromosome test” (2016).

As of 2019, the IOC set the max limit of testosterone for transgender females at 10 nmol/l (could change to 5 in future). DSD (Differences of Sex Development) athletes had the same regulations. After Dutee Chand, who will be introduced in the next slide, it reduced to 5. These regulations have developed as... “It believes that individuals who have natural testosterone levels higher than the average healthy female (0.4 nmol/l to 2.0 nmol/l), and whose androgen receptors can uptake the testosterone, have an unfair advantage over peers in their category.” (2019).

Not only does the IOC require invasive testing, but the evidence suggesting the elevated testosterone levels allow for athletic advantage is not nearly strong enough to support these rulings and has been proven false on several occasions.



# THE STORY OF CASTER SEMENYA & THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE

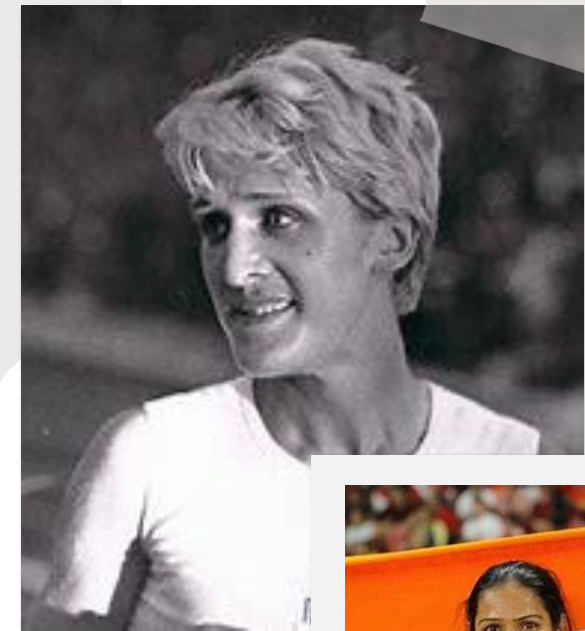
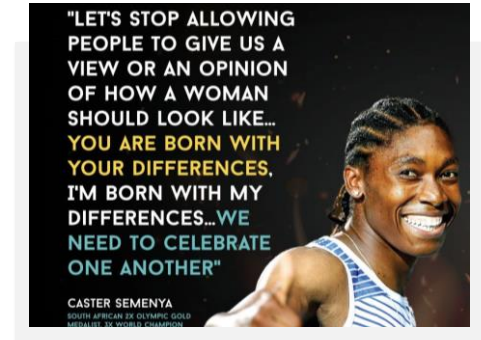
Caster Semenya, a South African Olympic runner, is one of the many Olympians who have been impacted because of the IOC's testosterone rulings. Semenya is a two-time Olympic champion, and three-time world champion. After a victory at the Berlin World Championships in 2009, at the age of 18, governing figures from World Athletics requested Semenya take a gender test. With this, the organization threatened to withdraw Semenya's world title if testing proved the athlete was not female. Results of the test were not made public, but media leaks suggested that Semenya may have both male and female characteristics, otherwise referred to as being intersex.

Rulings on testosterone levels have since been adjusted, but in 2018, it was still not enough that Semenya would be able to compete unless she took testosterone-reducing drugs.

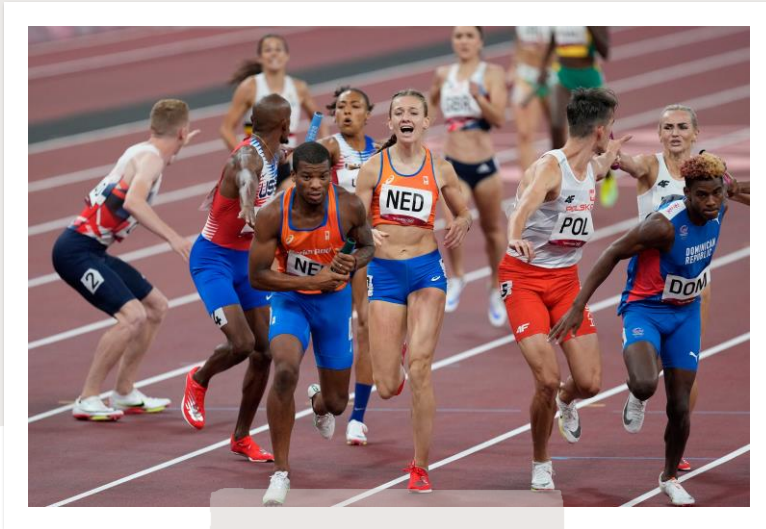
Similarly, athletes like Dutee Chand and Ewa Klubokowska have faced challenges due to athletic rules on testosterone limits.

Ewa Klubokowska, a Polish sprinter, won a bronze medal while running at the 1964 Olympics. Years later, at the 1966 Olympics, officials made sex testing mandatory for female athletes. Klubokowska was examined in what was referred to as a "nude parade," and ultimately passed her test that year. However, just the next year, physical exams were replaced with chromosomal testing, and Klubokowska would need to redo her tests, which she ultimately failed that year, causing her to be banned from competing as a female.

Dutee Chand, an Indian sprinter, faced similar problems, failing the testosterone limit tests that were set at 10 nanomoles per liter. She appealed the decision, arguing that there was a lack of scientific evidence that elevated testosterone increased performance. Ultimately, the Court of Arbitration for Sport agreed and lifted the ban only for the 2016 Olympics.



# THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF GENDER IN SPORTS



There is plenty to be said about the many disparities that women, transgender, intersex, and DSD athletes face across all sports at all levels. Many of which I did not mention within this project. A lengthy list could be made of the imbalances in sports between men, women, and transgender athletes.

Ultimately, sports are just another example of how we are “doing gender.” The history of sports, and the Olympic games, have been founded on the norms and roles that society has historically associated with gender, which continue to carry into modern day sports. Though great improvements have been made with time, there are still many changes that must come, most of which tend to affect women, transgender, and intersex athletes.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

BBC. (2023, November 15). *Caster Semenya Q&A: Who is she and why is her case important?*. BBC Sport. <https://www.bbc.com/sport/athletics/67367157>

This article provides important information which introduces Caster Semenya, her experience with the public learning about her DSD, and how that has impacted her experience within sports. It also notes the meaning of DSD, and the rules surrounding DSD in sports.

Cretaz, F. de la. (2022, March 23). *The IOC has a new trans-inclusion framework, but is the damage already done?*. Sports Illustrated. <https://www.si.com/olympics/2022/03/23/transgender-athletes-testosterone-policies-ioc-framework>

Information from this writing includes the new trans-inclusion framework developed by the IOC following the Winter Olympics in Beijing. It discusses what this new framework would change moving forward, while also questioning past rulings, and whether this new framework will truly be beneficial for athletes.

Frattini, K. (2019, May 3). *Policing gender boundaries: Testosterone, sex-testing, and human rights*. cyclingnews.com. <https://www.cyclingnews.com/features/policing-gender-boundaries-testosterone-sex-testing-and-human-rights/>

Once again, this article goes into the history of the IOC and IAAF's rules on testosterone levels, noting the changes that have been made with time. Most importantly, it also notes the science that these committees have used to support their rulings, and argues against them.

Heggie V. (2010). Testing sex and gender in sports; reinventing, reimagining and reconstructing histories. *Endeavour*, 34(4), 157–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2010.09.005>

In this source, author Vanessa Heggie constructs a journal on the topic of testing sex and gender within sports. This article provides important insight into the history of sex testing for sports, which started as early as the 1930s (contrary to what other articles claim began in the 1960s). This source addresses several other important points, including femininity, reconstructing gender, and several examples of athletes who have gone through challenges due to this testing.

Honderich, H. (2021, July 23). *Gender disparities still VEX Tokyo olympic games*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-57937102>

This article from BBC provides several disqualifications and problems that arose during the Tokyo Olympics as a result of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and how various rulings have impacted women athletes. This source will be useful, as it provides more insight into the disparities that women athletes face in sports, and specifically the ability to participate in the Olympics. Many of these rules are ones which would also not affect men.

*IOC mission*. International Olympic Committee. (n.d.). <https://olympics.com/ioc/mission>

This page provides further insight and information on the International Olympic Committee. It lists out the mission, goals, and purpose of the IOC within the Olympics.

*IOC releases framework on fairness, inclusion and non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sex variations - olympic news*. International Olympic Committee. (2021,

This quick article explains the changes recently made by the IOC, within their new framework on “Fairness, Inclusions, and Non-Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sex Variations.” This writing lays out the new framework, noting what is being changed, and the goals the IOC has in mind.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Key milestones in the IOC's history*. International Olympic Committee. (n.d.-b). <https://olympics.com/ioc/history/institutional>

This page offers information on the history of the International Olympic Committee, noting when it began, and how the organization has changed since 1894. A timeline of events and achievements are shown.

Minsberg, T. (2021, July 22). *When gender equality at the Olympics is not so equal*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/22/sports/olympics/olympics-athletes-gender.html>

This source also provides further insight into the International Olympic Committee, not only observing past gender inequality within the athletes of the Olympic games, but also within the Committee itself. This source is important to my project, as it states the history and current makeup of the people within the IOC itself, along with previous rulings they have made for the games.

Padawer, R. (2016, June 28). *The humiliating practice of sex-testing female athletes*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/magazine/the-humiliating-practice-of-sex-testing-female-athletes.html>

This source goes into great detail on the requirements regarding sex-testing for female athletes. Within this article, the story of Dutee Chand is also mentioned, while also diving into the history of athletes who have been impacted by regulations since the early 1900s.

Reid, G., & Worden, M. (2023, July 18). *Caster Semenya won her case, but not the right to compete*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/07/18/caster-semenya-won-her-case-not-right-compete>

This article from Human Rights Watch gives a real example of a recent woman athlete, Caster Semenya, who won a discrimination case in the European Court of Human Rights but is still potentially banned from competing in future Olympic games. This article explains the World Athletics regulations which came into effect in 2019 and shows a real case of how it is impacting women in the Olympics.

*Sex testing rules harm women athletes*. Human Rights Watch. (2023, March 31). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/31/sex-testing-rules-harm-women-athletes>

This source, again from Human Rights Watch, starts out with a strong statement that says, "Regulations Used for Surveillance Based on Stereotypes, Not Science." This is a great recent source which updates us on new rules which went into effect in March of 2023, requiring women with elevated testosterone and other variations in sex characteristics to undergo medical procedures to reduce their testosterone levels to be eligible for athletic events. It also provides important information that there is no scientific proof that elevated testosterone leads to a performance advantage.

Tomizawa, R. (2016, May 18). *Ewa Klubokowska's timing was right in 1964, but wrong in 1967: The inexact science of gender testing in the 1960s*. The Olympians. <https://theolympians.co/2016/05/19/ewa-klubokowskas-timing-was-right-in-1964-but-wrong-in-1967-the-inexact-science-of-gender-testing-in-the-1960s/>

This writing goes through the story of Olympic athlete Ewa Klubokowska, an athlete who faced many challenges in the late 1960s as a result of gender testing at that time. It is important to notice within this article the former strategies that were once used for gender testing.

Vox. (2019, June 29). *The problem with sex testing in sports*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MICftLUzCI>

This video from Vox provides further insight to the case of Caster Semenya, as well as past women athletes such as Ewa Klubokowska and Dutee Chand, who have all face similar challenges as a result of rules imposed by the International Association of Athletic Federations. Additionally, this video also gives the history of these sex tests over time and argues that high testosterone has not been shown to create any advantages to athletes.