



COVERING SPORT

**Gender Equality and Media
Representation: From Paris 2024
to Milano Cortina 2026**

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This study, conducted by the Osservatorio di Pavia, is promoted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Bracco Foundation, in collaboration with the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation.



Concept and graphic design by Lundquist.

The study was published on 19 March 2026.

Cover image
Beijing 2022 Winter OG,
Speed skating, 5000m
Women - Francesca
LOLLOBRIGIDA (ITA).
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Olympic Committee (IOC) /
EVANS, Jason



Introduction

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Institutional letters

Bracco Foundation



The Winter Olympics and Paralympics celebrate sport at the highest level; while also shaping the way we perceive the talent, merit, and dedication of athletes. However, this responsibility isn't always fulfilled when it comes to gender representation in the media.

Media coverage of women in sport often falls short of portraying the magnitude of their

achievements. This is reductive and a serious missed opportunity for our society to represent the skill of women athletes. Moving forward, we need a more balanced narrative that focuses on performance, not prejudice.

This study – commissioned by the International Olympic Committee and the Bracco Foundation – was launched with this in mind. It uses scientific methods to assess how sport is covered in major television newscast and whether they comply with the IOC's guidelines on the representation of gender equality, fairness and inclusion in sport.

The figures in this report show there has been a reversal in the trend of misrepresenting women's sport, which is a promising sign. The Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Games brought women's sport back into the spotlight, with female athletes (58% compared to 42% for male athletes) and women's sport receiving greater coverage in Italian newscast.

“Media coverage of women in sport often falls short of portraying the magnitude of their achievements. This is reductive and a missed opportunity for our society to represent the skill of women athletes. Moving forward, we need a more balanced narrative that focuses on performance, not prejudice.”

Coverage of women's and men's competitions was balanced, and the number of female and male commentators was also balanced, as well as the number of athletes interviews – 49% women and 51% men. However, there is still work to be done in terms of 'mainstream' sport and the participation of Paralympic athletes.

For the Bracco Foundation, this study, conducted by the Osservatorio di Pavia, is part of a wider commitment to women's empowerment, which is also reflected in the #100esperte project, aimed at promoting more balanced representation.

This monitoring initiative, launched between the Paris 2024 and Milano Cortina 2026 games, provides an unprecedented knowledge base – a starting point for a shared commitment towards increasingly informed and responsible sports communication.

Diana Bracco
President of the Bracco Foundation

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Institutional letters

Milano Cortina Foundation



From the start of the bid process, the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation has been strongly committed to promoting gender equality,

recognising it is fundamental to bringing about lasting and meaningful change. Thanks in part to the IOC’s support, the 2026 Winter Olympic Games set a historic record, with women making up 47% of the athletes and the highest number of female officials and heads of delegation. Gender equality within the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation Organising Committee has been a priority from the start, achieved through constant monitoring. The Foundation has always believed that information and training should lead to action, as demonstrated by the gender balance of our 18,000 volunteers.

We developed a number of projects in the run-up to the Games, such as adapting the IOC’s Portrayal Guidelines: Gender-Equal, Fair and Inclusive Representation in Sport for communications to the specific context and culture of Italy; adopting the GeDI Assessment Tool, created by Deloitte and the IOC to promote gender

equality, diversity, and inclusion within the Foundation; and launching numerous partner-supported projects, such as She Leads and She’s Next. As a result, the men’s and women’s ice hockey finals and semi-finals were both held for the first time in the main

“Thanks in part to the IOC’s support, the 2026 Winter Olympic Games set a historic record, with women making up 47% of the athletes and the highest number of female officials and heads of delegation.”

venue, the Santa Giulia Ice Hockey Arena, helping to create optimal conditions for fair media coverage. The 21 Stages for Gender Equality in Italian Sport project, in collaboration with CONI, toured Italy to raise awareness of the challenges and opportunities related to gender equality in the world of sport. Finally, the Foundation has committed itself to promoting training courses for international certifications and implementing an innovative monitoring and safeguarding system during competitions, to ensure an effective and sustainable system of protection for athletes and participants in the Games.

We hope that these achievements will serve as an inspiration for future generations. By working together we can achieve even greater and more meaningful goals.

Diana Bianchedi
Chief Strategy Planning & Legacy Officer at the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation

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Guidelines on the portrayal of gender in sport: gender equality, fairness and inclusion

GUIDELINES ON GENDER-EQUAL, FAIR AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION IN SPORT

The Olympic Games are a global platform that helps shape the way sport is portrayed and perceived. For this reason, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has developed guidelines to promote a balanced representation of women and men in sport, helping the media and organisations to avoid stereotypes and foster a more equitable and inclusive narrative.

RECOGNISING STEREOTYPES AND OVERCOMING CLICHÉS

A first step is to identify the most common biases in media coverage of sport. The most common include an emphasis on female athletes' physical appearance, the portrayal of men as more competitive or determined, less visibility and coverage of women's sport, and the use of stereotypical or reductive language. Recognising these helps to address them

and create a more balanced narrative.

FOR A FAIRER PORTRAYAL

The IOC guidelines provide practical recommendations for media, sports organisations, and communication professionals. This study is based on the 2024 Italian edition, and key recommendations include:

- Use neutral and respectful language: avoid stereotypes and irrelevant comments about physical appearance.
- Give equal visibility to sporting performances: highlight results, skills and athletic preparation.
- Portray the diversity of roles in sport: include female athletes, coaches, managers and industry professionals.
- Use balanced images that focus on sporting action, skill and professionalism.

The guidelines also promote the fair and non-discriminatory portrayal of transgender people and athletes with variations in sex characteristics.



Figure 1

APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES IN THE ANALYSIS

These guidelines serve as the methodological framework for the analysis presented in this document. The criteria described here were used to observe and assess the portrayal of women and men in media coverage of the Games.

Sport is uniquely positioned to contribute to shift public discourse and challenge negative stereotypes and gender norms.

- International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Figure 1
 Cover of the "Portrayal Guidelines: Gender-Equal, Fair and Inclusive Representation in Sport" by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

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Sport coverage in the media

The global context

AN UNBALANCED PORTRAYAL

This study was conducted with the aim of analysing whether the Olympic and Paralympic Games can be an opportunity for a better gender balance in media coverage of sport, offering a positive example within the broader context of sports coverage. Numerous international studies show that there continue to be significant imbalances in the way women and men are portrayed in the media content.

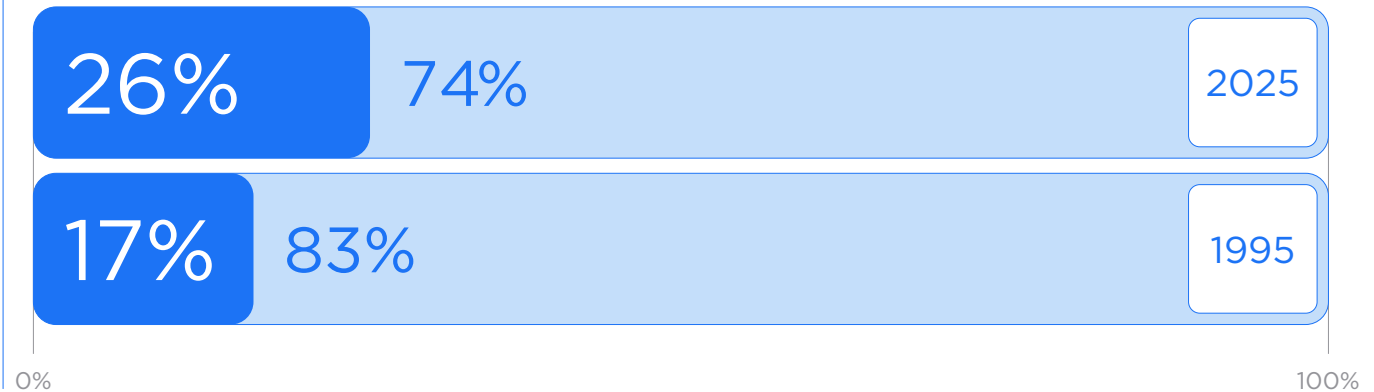
One of the main tools used to analyse these dynamics is the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)*, the largest international monitoring programme on the portrayal and visibility of women in the news media. Conducted every five years since 1995, the study analyses thousands of news items across numerous countries to assess the extent to which women are represented in the news and the roles attributed to them. The findings from the 2025 edition

confirm that there is a persistent gap: **women account for 26% of people seen, heard, or mentioned in the news worldwide.** Despite some progress over time, change remains slow: in 1995, the figure stood at **17%, an increase of only nine percentage points** over 30 years of data collection. The monitoring also reveals that women appear less frequently as experts or authoritative sources, while they feature more often as witnesses or as people sharing personal experiences.



Figure 2

Increase in the representation of women in the news across all areas over the past 30 years*



Sources
 * Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), "Progress on a plateau", 2025

Figure 2
 Paris 2024 OG, Athletics, 3000m steeple, Women - Final, Winfred YAVI (BRN) 1st.
 © 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / RUTAR, Ubald

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COVERAGE OF FEMALE ATHLETES IN THE MEDIA

Significant differences in visibility and public recognition between women and men also persist in the world of sport. According to the GMMP 2025, women account for **only 15% of the subjects and sources** in sports news. The disparity is also evident in media coverage: **only 2%** of female journalists cover sport, **compared with 8%** of men. This imbalance is also evident in other areas of the sports system.

2%

of female journalists cover sport*

8%

of male journalists cover sport*

In 2025, the highest-earning athlete was Cristiano Ronaldo, with earnings of **around \$260 million**, while the second-highest-earning athlete was boxer Canelo Álvarez, with earnings of **\$137 million**. Among female athletes, the highest earner was tennis player Coco Gauff, with **around \$23 million****. This gap also reflects the structure of the global sports system: the sports that generate the most revenue and visibility – such as football and basketball – are dominated by men’s competitions, while sports such as tennis are one of the few exceptions where female athletes achieve widespread recognition.

There is also limited representation of women in sports governance. According to the IOC, women account for an average of **around 13% of accredited coaches** at the Olympic Games (IOC, 2021), indicating that they are still under-represented in technical and decision-making roles within sport. Female athletes also tend to be portrayed with

greater focus on non-sporting aspects – such as their physical appearance or private lives – while results and technical skills tend to be more closely associated with male athletes. As highlighted in the IOC’s **“Portrayal Guidelines: Gender-Equal, Fair And Inclusive Representation In Sport”**, these dynamics help create a portrayal of sport in which media attention, financial recognition, and leadership roles show a disproportionate distribution between genders.

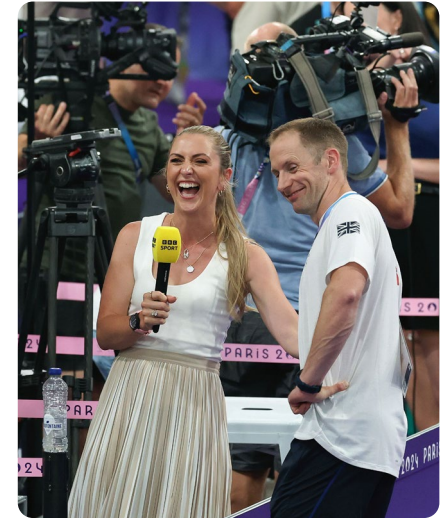
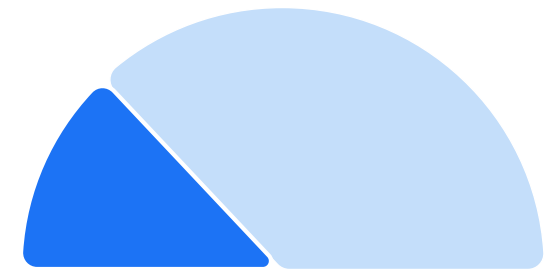


Figure 3

Women among people mentioned or featured in global news stories*



26%
women in the news

74%
men in the news

Sources
* Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), “Progress on a plateau”, 2025
** Sportico, “Highest-paid male athletes” and “Highest-paid female athletes”, 2025

Figure 3
Paris 2024 OG, Cycling Track, Men.
© 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / HASENSTEIN, Alexander

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THE PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN THE ITALIAN NEWS MEDIA

In Italy, too, there is still limited representation of women in the news media. The latest national edition of the Global Media Monitoring Project reveals that women account for **just 21% of the people appearing in or mentioned** in news stories in the Italian media. This figure highlights a significant disparity when compared with the country's demographics. Women make up **51.7% of the population** but remain significantly under-represented in the media.

This trend can also be observed at the international level, where women continue to be under-represented in the news despite some progress made in recent decades.

The analysis also shows that, even in the Italian context, the increase in female visibility in the media has been slow and uneven across the different areas of journalistic coverage, indicating that the media continue struggling to reflect the true presence of women in Italian society.

ROLES, SOURCES, AND PATTERNS OF REPRESENTATION

In addition to their lower overall presence, the representation of women in Italian news is also influenced by the types of roles assigned to them in journalistic coverage.

In 2025, **only 30% of the experts quoted or interviewed** in Italian media were women, who were also under-represented as spokespersons for companies, bodies, institutions, and organisations (**20%**).

At the same time, women continue to be portrayed more frequently in passive roles or in contexts relating to their personal lives: in **23% of cases***, they are presented in terms of their family roles – as someone's wife, mother or daughter – a pattern that is much less common in the case of men (**4%**). This kind of gender stereotyping can also emerge in sports coverage, where the focus is on female athletes' personal or family lives rather

30%

of experts interviewed in the media are women*

23%

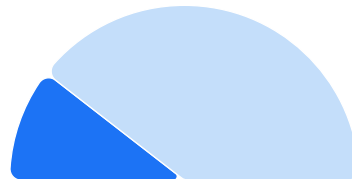
of women are identified by their family roles*

Women in society vs. women in the news*



51.7%

of the Italian population are women



21%

of people appearing or mentioned in the news are women

Source
* Analysis by Osservatorio di Pavia, based on data from the [Global Media Monitoring Project \(GMMP\)](#), "Italy National Report", 2025

than on their sporting achievements. Overall, the findings suggest that, in Italy too, women have less visibility in the media and are often portrayed in ways that tend to limit their role as protagonists, experts, or authoritative sources of information.

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AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT: SIGNS OF CHANGE IN THE GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS

The global information system is, however, showing signs of improvement. According to the findings of the Global Media Monitoring Project 2025, the number of female reporters continues to rise worldwide, accounting for **around 40% of news coverage in print**, television and radio, with even higher percentages online. Furthermore, news articles written by female journalists are consistently more likely to **feature female subjects (29%) than those written by men (24%)**, highlighting the importance of gender equality in newsrooms as a potential route towards fairer representation.

40%

of journalists worldwide are women, across press, television and radio news*

At the same time, in the world of sport, female figures such as volleyball player Paola Egonu, alpine skier Federica Brignone,

fencer Bebe Vio, and tennis player Jasmine Paolini (just to name a few) are gaining increasing visibility and public

recognition, helping to broaden media attention towards women's sport and providing new role models.

Figure 4



Source
* Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), "Italy National Report", 2025

Figure 4
Milano Cortina 2026 Winter OG, Alpine skiing, giant slalom Women - Federica BRIGNONE (ITA) 1st.
© 2026 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / MONTESANO, Chiara

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The monitoring process

Research objectives and structure

A SHARED AND INDEPENDENT FRAMEWORK

The study analyses how sport and its key figures are portrayed in Italian newscasts, with a particular focus on the presence and portrayal of female athletes in sports news coverage. The monitoring is sponsored by the International Olympic Committee and the Bracco Foundation, which launched the study to understand the role of the media in promoting equality, fairness and inclusion in sport. Data collection and analysis were carried out by the Osservatorio

di Pavia, an independent research institute specialising in media analysis and research. This approach ensures methodological rigour and scientific independence in the collection and interpretation of data.

The partnership between the research sponsors and the organisation responsible for the analysis is further enhanced by collaboration from the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation, which is helping to build a legacy of knowledge and best practices for future Olympic and Paralympic Games.

FROM THE PARIS GAMES TO THE MILANO CORTINA WINTER GAMES: THREE STAGES OF ANALYSIS

The research was designed as a longitudinal study, enabling an analysis of how sport is portrayed in the media at different stages of the Olympic cycle.

The monitoring process consists of three main stages:

- Qualitative and quantitative analysis of media coverage of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

- Quantitative analysis of sports coverage in the period following the Games, to observe the dynamics of sports coverage in an ordinary context
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis of the coverage of the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games

This framework makes it possible to compare sports coverage during major events with routine coverage, offering a comparative analysis of sports news.

The research process*



Source
 * Osservatorio di Pavia, "La copertura dello sport femminile in un anno di informazione TV dopo Parigi 2024", 2026

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The monitoring process

Sample and analytical indicators

THE OBSERVED SAMPLE

The monitoring focuses on Italian television newscast broadcast during prime time, which are regarded as one of the main platforms through which sport features in general news coverage.

These newscast provide unique insight into the construction of the media agenda and the way in which sport is presented to the public. According to

the AGCOM* Communications Observatory, during the evening slot, the main general-interest channels reach a total audience of **over 12 million viewers**, with Rai 1 averaging **over 4 million viewers**, confirming the central role of television news in the public's media consumption.

The sample includes the evening newscast of the **seven main national news channels**: TG1, TG2, TG3, TG4, TG5, Studio Aperto and TG LA7.

Italian newscasts broadcast during prime time**

Rai	 TG1 h 20:00	 TG2 h 20:30	 TG3 h 19:00
Mediaset	 TG4 h 18:55	 TG5 h 20:00	STUDIOAPERTO Studio Aperto h 18:30
LA7	 TG LA7 h 20:00		

Sources

* Italian Communications Regulatory Authority (AGCOM), "Osservatorio sulle comunicazioni 4/2025"

** Logos and trademarks belong to their respective owners and are used for information purposes only.

ANALYSIS INDICATORS

The analysis of relevant news stories is based on a set of indicators that enable a systematic examination of the presence and portrayal of sport in television newscast, with a particular focus on differences in the visibility and media coverage of female and male athletes. The main aspects analysed include:

- The number of news stories dedicated to sport
- The presence of female and male athletes in the news and their role in journalistic reporting
- The interviews and interviewees, to analyse the distribution of voices in sports coverage
- The language used in news stories
- Images and methods of visual representation
- The inclusion of authoritative voices and expert commentary
- The characteristics of journalistic storytelling in terms of stereotypes that are reinforced or challenged/deconstructed.

The analysis combines quantitative and qualitative data, enabling us to examine both the space allocated to women's sport and the way in which the narrative is constructed.

AN APPROACH ALIGNED WITH IOC STANDARDS

The indicators used in the monitoring process reflect some of the aspects identified in the IOC's Portrayal Guidelines for gender-equal, fair and inclusive representation, which promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women and men in sport.

The guidelines identify a number of key areas for promoting balanced coverage of sport, including language use, imagery, balanced reporting and source quality.

Ultimately, the link between the analytical method and the international standard makes it possible to interpret the monitoring results within a shared framework.

Executive summary

02.

Executive Summary

COVERING SPORT

Gender Equality and Media Representation: From Paris 2024 to Milano Cortina 2026

1 OCTOBER 2024 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2025

2,706 NEWS STORIES ON THE TV NEWS

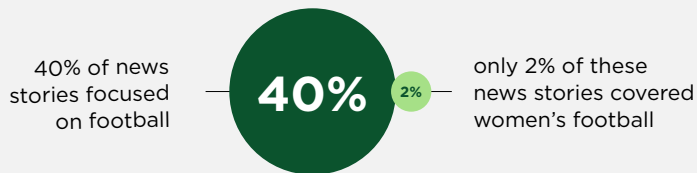
THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE GAMES

Outside major events, the narrative changed dramatically: few sports, mainly men's, and limited coverage of women.

Media coverage of women's and men's sport



Football dominated, while women remained on the sidelines:

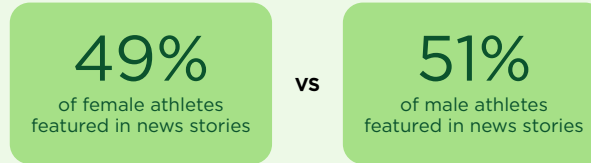


26 JULY – 11 AUGUST 2024

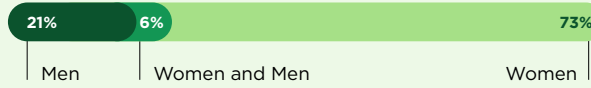
476 NEWS STORIES ON THE TV NEWS

PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC GAMES

During the Games, the narrative became more open: female athletes were given a voice in the media and became the focus of more balanced coverage.



7% of content featuring stereotypes primarily affects women:



93% of news stories used non-sexist language

95% of images were non-sexist

26% of experts interviewed were women

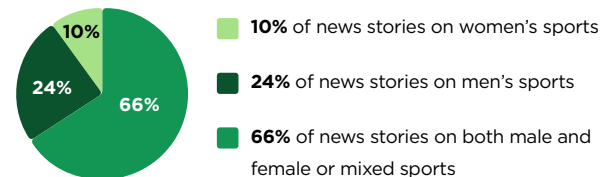
28 AUGUST – 8 SEPTEMBER 2024

54 NEWS STORIES ON THE TV NEWS

PARIS 2024 PARALYMPIC GAMES

Coverage narrowed and became skewed: the number of women featured decreased, and the narrative focused primarily on men.

A less balanced narrative

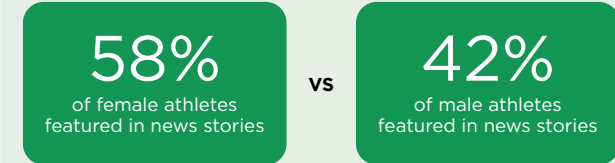


6 – 22 FEBRUARY 2026

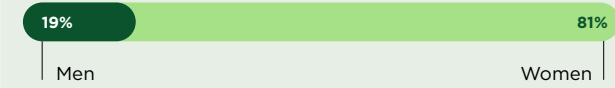
331 NEWS STORIES ON THE TV NEWS

MILANO CORTINA 2026 OLYMPIC GAMES

Female athletes became more visible, partly thanks to the medals they won. However, this does not translate into a qualitatively more advanced narrative.



16% of content containing stereotypes continued to primarily target women:



95% of news stories used non-sexist language

98% of images were non-sexist

31% of experts interviewed were women

6 – 15 MARCH 2026

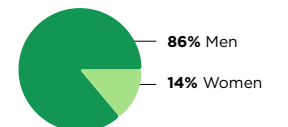
25 NEWS STORIES ON THE TV NEWS

MILANO CORTINA 2026 PARALYMPIC GAMES

Female para-athletes were not very prominent, but they were presented appropriately; however, the authoritative voices in the coverage were predominantly male.



Men were interviewed much more frequently than women:



Olympic and Paralympic Games

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03.1 | **The Paris 2024 Games**

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The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Source

* Osservatorio di Pavia, "The Olympic Games in Italian TV News", 2024

Figure 5

Paris 2024 OG, Fencing, sabre individual Women - Qualification, Manon APITHY-BRUNET (FRA) 1st versus YOON Jisu (KOR). Manon APITHY-BRUNET. © 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / KINNO, Kohjiro

The Paris 2024 Games

Equality at the heart of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

A STEP FORWARD TOWARDS FAIRNESS IN SPORT

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games marked a historic milestone for the Olympic movement.

For the first time, participation quotas were equally divided between women and men, an unprecedented level of gender balance in Olympic history.

Although the qualification processes resulted in **women's**

participation being slightly below the quota allocated by the IOC, it still came close to parity (**49%**).

This is an important milestone on the path towards greater fairness in sport.

FEMALE ATHLETES AT THE HEART OF THE ITALIAN TEAM

The Italian delegation reflected this shift: **female athletes made up almost half of the Italian**

team and achieved great results for Italy's medal tally, winning **9 gold medals, compared to 3 for the men, and a total of 17 out of 40 medals.**

This context made Paris 2024 a particularly interesting case study for analysing the media representation of sport.

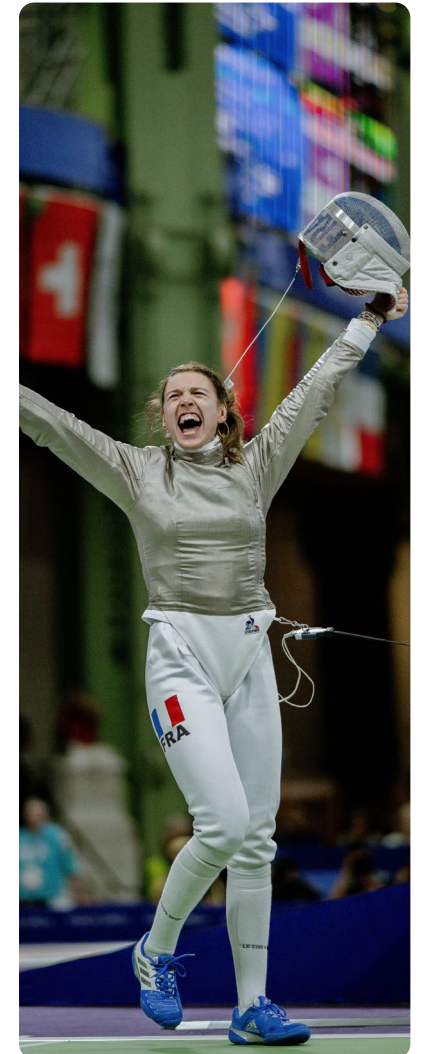
PARIS 2024 PARALYMPIC GAMES

At the Paralympic Games, **female athletes accounted for 45% of the international participants (1,983 out of a total of 4,400 athletes).**

The Italian delegation had a higher proportion of female athletes, at **49%, more than four percentage points above the international average.**

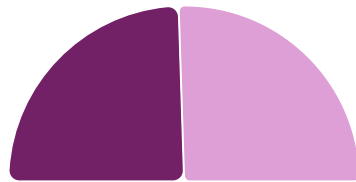
Female athletes also won **43% of the 68 individual medals**, plus three medals in mixed events.

Figure 5



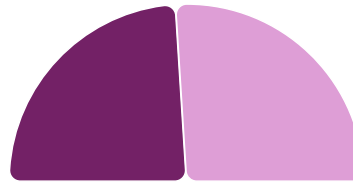
03.

Actual participation*



49%

of athletes at the 2024 Olympic Games were women



48%

of athletes representing Italy at the 2024 Olympic Games were women

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The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Paris 2024 Games

An overview: towards a more balanced sports narrative

A LARGELY INCLUSIVE NARRATIVE

An analysis of news coverage of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games reveals an overall representation of sport that is mindful of gender equality.

In most cases, the language used in the stories was respectful and non-sexist, while the images depicted female and male athletes in a balanced manner, highlighting their role in sport.

Only in a few news stories did forms of sexism or stereotypical representations emerge, often linked to rhetorical devices or references to female athletes' bodies and emotions.

BALANCED VISIBILITY OF FEMALE AND MALE ATHLETES

In terms of media visibility, the coverage of the Olympic Games demonstrated an almost perfect balance between women and men. Women's disciplines received substantially the same coverage as men's, and female

athletes featured prominently in news stories, similar to that of male athletes. This balance is a significant factor, as it demonstrates how, during major sporting events, the media can help to create a more balanced portrayal of sport.

THE UNRESOLVED ISSUE: AUTHORITATIVE VOICES

Despite the positive results in terms of female athletes' visibility and the quality of

coverage, there remains an imbalance in the representation of authoritative voices.

When the media give a platform to experts, commentators, or institutional spokespersons, men continue to be consulted more often than women.

This indicates that the recognition of female authority in sport can still be improved.

Distribution of sports news stories by gender during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games*

27%

women's sports

25%

men's sports

48%

women's, men's or mixed sports

Figure 6



Source

* Osservatorio di Pavia, "The Olympic Games in Italian TV News", 2024

Figure 6

Paris 2024 OG, Artistic Gymnastics, floor exercises Women - Medal Ceremony. Simone BILES (USA) 2nd, Rebeca ANDRADE (BRA) 1st and Jordan CHILES (USA) 3rd. © 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / RUTAR, Ubald

Sample: 357 NEWS STORIES

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The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Source

* Osservatorio di Pavia, "The Olympic Games in Italian TV News", 2024

** On average, fewer than one news story per day per TV newscast

Figure 7

Martina Caironi
Athlete Representative for the International Paralympic Committee, the Athletes' Council of the Milano Cortina 2026 Foundation and World Para Athletics. Multiple Paralympic medal winner in the 100 m and long jump, member of the 'Fiamme Gialle' club. Photo from the exhibition "A Life in Sport: The Faces and Achievements of 100 Female Experts"
© Bracco Foundation / BRU-NEAU, Gerald

The Paris 2024 Games

An overview: towards a more balanced sports narrative

LESS VISIBILITY AND MORE CRITICAL ISSUES

Coverage of the Paralympic Games was significantly more limited than that of the Olympic Games.

This is in part due to certain structural characteristics of the event: the overall number of athletes is lower, many of the sports and athletes are less well known to the general public and, in the case of the Paris 2024 Games, the competitions took place in September, a period of the year when news agendas typically become busier again after the summer break, leaving less space for coverage.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights several critical issues in the coverage: women's sports and female athletes received less visibility than men, and in some cases, the coverage reproduced narrative tropes that combine heroism and pity, overshadowing the sporting aspect.

Distribution of sports news by gender during the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games

10%

women's sports

24%

men's sports

66%

women's, men's or mixed sports



Sample: 41 NEWS STORIES*

Figure 7



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The Paris 2024 Games

Coverage of the Olympic Games: inclusive language and few stereotypes

The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

PARALYMPIC GAMES

MOSTLY RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE

An analysis of news coverage of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games reveals a narrative that is overall respectful of the dignity of both women and men.

In 93% of the news stories, the language used is non-sexist, while a small proportion use expressions that perpetuate gender inequalities. Forms of benevolent sexism also emerge, often expressed through non-sporting metaphors or nicknames used to highlight the performance of female athletes.

MORE INCLUSIVE STORIES

In 77% of the news stories, women are explicitly referred to using feminine forms. In contrast, **in 17% of the stories**, ‘over-extended masculine’ forms are used to refer to mixed groups – for example, when mentioning the ‘Italian Olympic team’, only the masculine plural is used. **The remaining 6% of the news stories** use mixed language.



Figure 8

STEREOTYPES PRESENT BUT LIMITED

Gender stereotypes were identified **in 7% of the news stories**. In most cases, they concern women and are mainly linked to references to female athletes’ bodies or emotions.

However, there are also positive examples: some stories focus on the sporting performance and achievements of female athletes, moving beyond stereotypes to contribute to a more respectful portrayal of sport.

Key figures*

7%

of news stories use language considered sexist

73%

of news stories containing stereotypes concern women

Sample: **476 NEWS STORIES**

Source

* Osservatorio di Pavia, “The Olympic Games in Italian TV News”, 2024

Figure 8

Paris 2024 OG, Judo, team Mixed - Qualification, the Olympic Refugee Team (EOR) - Spain (ESP). Team EOR.

© 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / RUTAR, Ubald

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The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Source

* Osservatorio di Pavia, "The Olympic Games in Italian TV News", 2024

Figure 9

Page on image portrayal, from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) document "Portrayal Guidelines: Gender-Equal, Fair and Inclusive Representation in Sport" by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)"

Figure 10

Milano Cortina 2026 Winter OG, Skeleton, team Mixed - Susanne KREHER and Axel JUNGK (GER) 2nd. © 2026 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / MONTESANO, Chiara

The Paris 2024 Games

Images of the Olympic Games: mostly inclusive representations

EQUAL COVERAGE

In the vast majority of cases, the images accompanying news stories on the Olympic Games present a balanced and respectful portrayal of female and male athletes.

In 96% of the news stories, the images are inclusive, showing women and men in various sporting contexts – during competitions, at medal ceremonies, or interacting with the public.

These images help to highlight the sporting aspect of the competitions and to represent the diversity of the Games' participants.

RARE INSTANCES OF PROBLEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS

Non-inclusive or sexist images appear in only a small proportion of the news.

In 97% of the stories, the images are non-sexist, while

the few problematic cases mainly concern objectifying or sexualised shots, which can shift the focus from sporting performance to the athletes' bodies.

Key figures*

96%

of news stories are accompanied by inclusive images*

97%

of news stories are accompanied by non-sexist images*

Sample: **476 NEWS STORIES**

Figure 9

IMAGERY

Stories are told through images, whether still or moving. The way we use images must reflect the diversity that exists among sports, athletes and fans, but it must also factor in equality and balance – both in quality and in quantity.

At all times, keep these visual guidelines in mind:

- ✓ **Active, authentic and respectful visual imagery**
which portrays sportspeople in their environment.
- ✗ **Avoid passive, sexy imagery**
of sportspeople which reinforces stereotypes.
- ✓ **Athleticism and sporting prowess**
should be the focus of the imagery.
- ✗ **Do not focus unnecessarily on looks**
(e.g. make-up, hair, nails, clothing or intimate body parts (e.g. crotch shots, cleavage, backsides), especially if it does not relate to an athlete's performance.
- ✓ **Give equal exposure**
to all the athletes in team sports as much as possible.
- ✗ **Do not focus too much or only on the same athlete**
within the team unless it links to sport and performance.
- ✓ **Capture diversity**
among sportspeople in terms of gender and other dimensions such as sport, ethnicity or age.
- ✗ **Ensure there are not significantly more images of one gender or community**
in relation to the other.
- ✓ **Balance strength, power and speed with gracefulness, agility, and elegance**
in athlete imagery.
- ✗ **Avoid reinforcing feminine and masculine stereotypes**
or focusing solely on "gender-appropriate" sports.

TIP: CURATE A GENDER-BALANCED PHOTO GALLERY
Getty Images curated a 'Best of Women's Sports' editorial and creative collection in partnership with the Women's Sport Trust in the UK featuring the world's top sportswomen in action. For more inspiration, visit: www.gettyimages.co.uk/resources/sportswomen



Figure 10

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The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

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The Paris 2024 Games

Who has a voice in covering the Olympic Games?

FEMALE AND MALE JOURNALISTS: ALMOST EQUAL

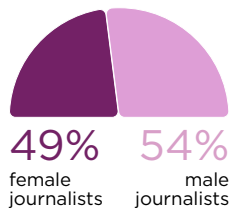
Overall, the journalistic coverage of the Olympic Games on Italian television newscast was balanced in terms of the presence of female and male journalists.

Almost half of the stories, interviews, and news items broadcast from the studio or live from Paris were produced by female media professionals.

However, a closer look at the data reveals a difference in the distribution of the topics covered.

Female and male journalists who covered the Paris Games*

Sample: **484 JOURNALISTS**
(RAI, MEDIASET AND LA7)



NEWS STORY TOPICS: A DIFFERENT DISTRIBUTION

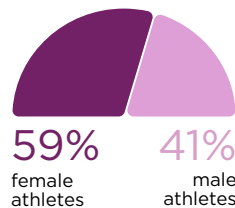
An analysis of the topics covered reveals that male and female journalists tend to report on different types of news.

Male journalists are more prevalent in news stories directly related to competitions and sporting performance, while female journalists appear more frequently in stories on contextual issues, such as institutional events, ceremonies, or social issues.

This distribution suggests a consistent division of roles in sports coverage.

Interviews with athletes taking part in the Paris Games*

Sample: **246 ATHLETES**

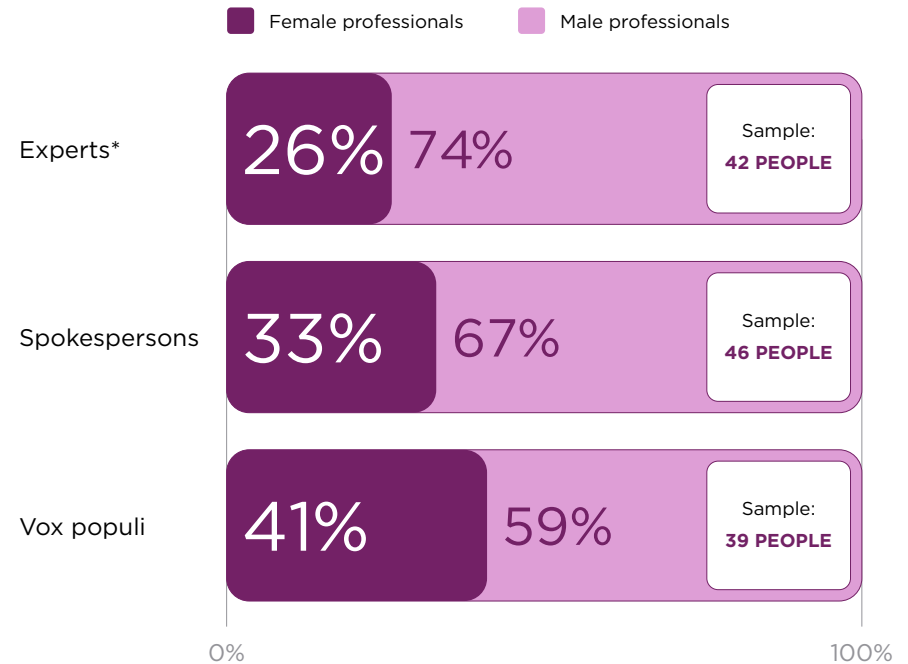


THE VOICES INTERVIEWED: A PERSISTENT IMBALANCE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF AUTHORITATIVE VOICES

The distribution of the voices featured in the stories reveals a clear disparity in the

representation of authoritative figures. Men were more frequently involved as spokespersons and experts, while women, although still in the minority, appeared more often as voices of public opinion.

Interviews with female and male experts, spokespersons, and members of the public*



Source
* Osservatorio di Pavia, "The Olympic Games in Italian TV News", 2024

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The Paris 2024 Games

The Paralympics on the TV news: less visibility and some critical issues

The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

PARALYMPIC GAMES

LIMITED COVERAGE

As mentioned in the summary of findings, the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games received significantly less coverage than the Olympic Games on the main Italian television newscast.

Overall, **54 news stories were broadcast, equivalent to approximately 4.5 stories per day, or less than one story per TV newscast** on average.

Given the small number of stories, the results should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the analysis enables us to identify several key elements.

A NARRATIVE WITH SOME CRITICAL ISSUES

Although coverage of the Paralympic Games was generally respectful, it did not fully align with the recommendations in the IOC guidelines. Most (**94%**) news stories use non-sexist language, and **87%** are accompanied by inclusive images.

However, in many of the stories, the language used is not fully inclusive, and in some cases, stereotypes emerge that blur the lines between the sporting performance and disability.

These narratives sometimes tend to emphasize the personal or heroic dimension of the para-athletes – the so-called ‘hero despite disability’ narrative – rather than their performance and the competitive context.

LESS VISIBILITY FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

Some imbalances also emerge in gender representation. Although Italian female **paralympic athletes made up 49% of the Paralympic delegation** and won **over 40% of the medals**, women’s sports received significantly less coverage than men’s sports.

Female para-athletes received less visibility in media stories and were interviewed less frequently than male para-athletes.

FEMALE JOURNALISTS AND VOICES IN COVERAGE OF THE GAMES

Coverage of the Paralympic Games was provided to a significant extent by female journalists, with **57% of the stories, compared to 43% from male journalists**.

This seemingly positive figure may reflect a more complex reality: the higher number of female journalists covering the

Paralympics may be due to the limited importance attributed to the event in media coverage, meaning there’s a chance that topics considered less important are more frequently assigned to female journalists.

At the same time, the representation of women among the voices interviewed remains more limited: overall, few people were interviewed, and in most cases, they were men.

Key figures*

4.5

news stories per day

9%

of news stories contain stereotypes

63%

of news stories use inclusive language

57%

of news stories are authored by female journalists

Sample: **54 NEWS STORIES**

Source

* Osservatorio di Pavia, “The Olympic Games in Italian TV News”, 2024

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The inter-Olympic period

After Paris 2024: sport as a regular feature on the TV news

SPORT IN DAILY TELEVISION NEWS

To understand how sport and its key figures are covered in the media outside major international events, the study also monitored the presence of sports news on Italian television newscast in the year following the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The monitoring activities covered the prime-time editions of the main national newscasts broadcast by the Rai, Mediaset and La7 networks, from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025.

Over the **12 months analysed**, the TV newscast broadcast **44,144 news stories**. Of these, **2,706 were sport-related, accounting for approximately 6%** of the overall news agenda.

The first key finding was that sport is a constant but limited feature of the overall news agenda. While sport is not a marginal or occasional topic,

it is not enough, on its own, to rebalance the overall picture of general news coverage.

Available airtime is relatively limited, therefore the selection of sports and athletes therefore takes on even greater importance.

LIMITED AIRTIME MAKES COVERAGE HIGHLY SELECTIVE

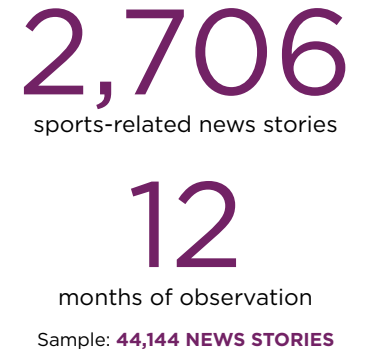
From this perspective, the inter-Olympic media monitoring study proved particularly useful in highlighting the difference between the coverage of a major global event – which by nature expands the range of sports, athletes, and stories presented – and day-to-day television news operations.

During the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, coverage featured a wide range of sports and a more balanced representation of women and men. In the following year, however, reporting once again focused on a much more limited number of news stories and a much more

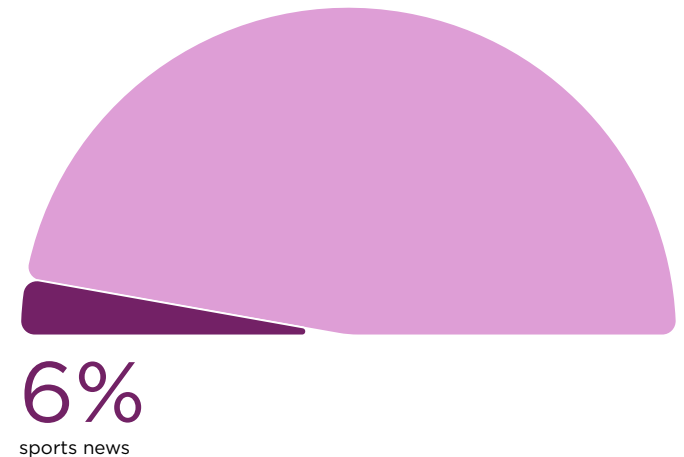
limited number of sports and, inevitably, athletes.

Naturally, the narrowing of the agenda has also had a direct impact on the representation of women’s sport: while some disciplines gave more space to female athletes, others – particularly those in the media spotlight – have continued to clearly favour men’s sport.

The figures after one year of monitoring following Paris 2024*



Time allocated to sport on prime-time TV newscasts*



Source
* Osservatorio di Pavia
“La copertura dello sport femminile in un anno di informazione TV dopo Parigi 2024”, 2026

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The inter-Olympic period

A landscape dominated by only a few sports

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF FOOTBALL

An analysis of sports news by discipline revealed that, in the year following the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, sports coverage on the news focused on a limited number of disciplines.

Football clearly dominated coverage, accounting for **40% of the sports news stories** broadcast on the TV news. It was followed by **tennis (19%)**, which, during this period, benefited from the attention generated by the international achievements of Jannik Sinner and his success on the ATP tour, and **skiing (7%)**.

All other sports accounted for much smaller shares of the overall coverage, with swimming, sailing, volleyball, and motorcycling accounting **for just around 2%**.

Overall, the top ten sports accounted **for 86% of sports news coverage**, highlighting a highly concentrated media agenda.

THE MEDIA HIERARCHY OF SPORTS AND GENDER IMPLICATIONS

This particular focus in media coverage has a significant impact on gender representation. Many of the sports that consistently feature in the

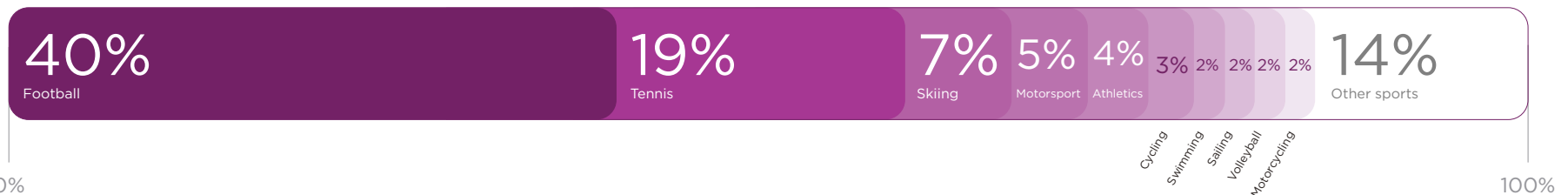
mainstream television agenda – starting with football – have historically been associated with male competitions. Therefore, sports coverage tends to prioritise male athletes and competitions, meaning there is less space for female athletes in news coverage.

In this context, women’s sport is more likely to feature in the news when it is accompanied by particularly notable results. In recent years, for example, Italian women’s tennis has gained prominence thanks to the achievements of Jasmine Paolini, who reached the finals at Roland Garros and Wimbledon in 2024. Similarly, the successes of the Italian women’s national

volleyball team, winner of the 2024 Nations League and consistently one of the most competitive teams at the international level, have helped to refocus media attention on a sport in which Italian female athletes have long played a leading role.

Understanding the structure of the sports agenda – which reflects a system that continues to invest primarily in men’s competitions and, in many contexts, still struggles to fully recognise female athletes as professionals – is essential to more accurately observing how the visibility of female athletes is represented on Italian television news.

The top 10 sports following the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games account for 86% of sports news*



Source
 * Osservatorio di Pavia
 "La copertura dello sport femminile in un anno di informazione TV dopo Parigi 2024", 2026

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The inter-Olympic period

When the Games end: the return of male dominance

THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPORTS COVERAGE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Unsurprisingly, an analysis of sports news by gender in the period following the Games revealed a marked imbalance in representation. Out of **2,706 sports news stories**, **75%** focused exclusively on men's sport, while **only 13%** were dedicated to women's sport. **A further 12% of the news stories** covered competitions or events in which both male and female athletes appeared.

In other words, **only 1 in 4 sports news stories** also covered women's sport to some extent, while most coverage remained focused on men's sport.

FROM OLYMPIC BALANCE TO EVERYDAY DISPARITY

This finding is particularly significant when compared to what was observed during the 2024 Paris Olympic Games,

when the distribution of coverage between women's and men's sport was much more balanced.

Therefore, in the transition from the global event to the regular TV news programming, sports coverage once again became markedly skewed towards men's competitions.

The analysis revealed that major events provide a better balance in the division of sports coverage, whereas day-to-day reporting on television news in-between major events sticks to the more established hierarchies of the sports agenda.

This dynamic became even more apparent when we took a closer look at which women's disciplines are given more ordinary media coverage.

Distribution of sports news by gender after the Paris 2024 Games*

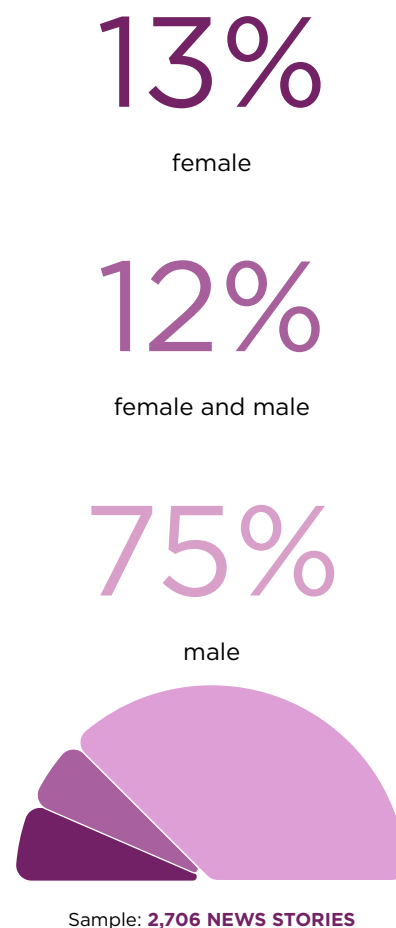
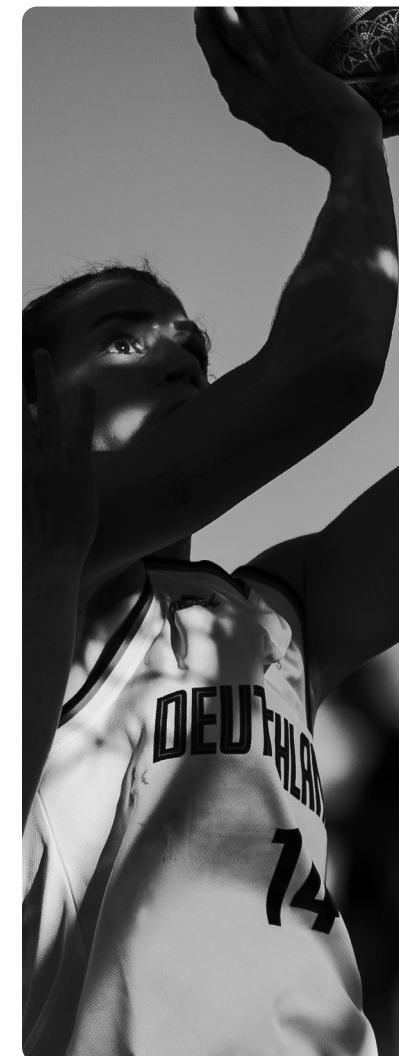


Figure 11



Source
 * Osservatorio di Pavia
 "La copertura dello sport femminile in un anno di informazione TV dopo Parigi 2024", 2026

Figure 11
 Paris 2024 OG, Basketball 3x3 Women - Semifinal, Germany (GER) 1st - Canada (CAN). Sonja GREINACHER (GER).
 © 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / KINNO, Kohjira

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The inter-Olympic period

Where female athletes are given space

A CONCENTRATED PRESENCE IN A FEW SPORTS

When women's sport entered the news narrative after the Paris 2024 Games, its coverage was concentrated on a limited number of disciplines. Out of the **344 news stories** dedicated exclusively to women's sport, **42%** focused on **skiing**, followed by **volleyball (13%)** and **tennis (12%)**. Smaller percentages were recorded for **gymnastics (6%)** and **swimming (6%)**, while **football (5%)**, **athletics (4%)**, **sailing (2%)** and **boxing (2%)** accounted for the smallest share of coverage.

WOMEN'S VISIBILITY IN THE MOST MEDIA-COVERED SPORTS

The relationship between gender and sport became even more evident when examining the sports that dominate the news agenda.

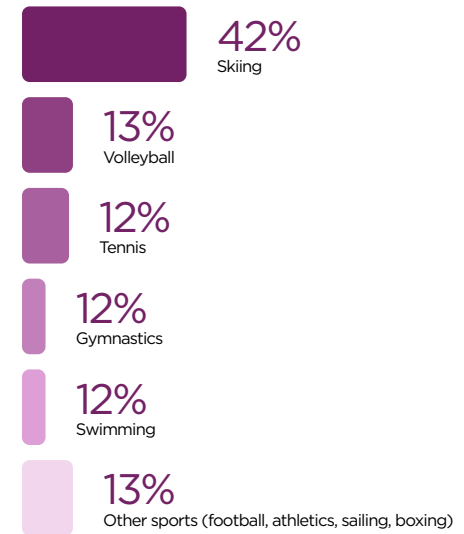
For football, which receives the most coverage in the news, there was very little coverage of the women's game: **only 2% of news stories** focused on it. In tennis, the presence of women was more significant (**23% of coverage**), while female skiers received the greatest visibility: **84% of the news stories** also

covered women's sport. This figure could be due to the strong presence, in recent years, of several prominent figures in Italian sports. Athletes such as Federica Brignone and Sofia Goggia, who have consistently ranked among the top competitors in international alpine skiing, have helped draw greater media attention to the sport, leading to increased coverage of women's sport in news broadcasts.

Overall, the monitoring analysis showed that female athletes' visibility is not evenly distributed across sports disciplines but is heavily influenced by media

coverage priorities. Some sports gave female athletes a greater platform, while others – particularly those that occupy a central position in the television sports narrative – continued to cover male athletes almost exclusively.

News coverage of women's sport by discipline following the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games*



Sample: **344 NEWS STORIES**

Share of representation of women in sports that 'matter'

2%

of football news covered women's competitions (always alone, except for one news story)

23%

of tennis news covered women's competitions (8% when playing alone)

84%

of skiing news covered women's competitions (76% when competing alone)

Source
* Osservatorio di Pavia
"La copertura dello sport femminile in un anno di informazione TV dopo Parigi 2024", 2026

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The focus is on:

OLYMPIC GAMES

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The Milano Cortina 2026 Games

Record female participation and outstanding sporting achievements

TOWARD MORE BALANCED PARTICIPATION

The Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics marked a significant milestone in terms of women's participation in elite sport.

For the first time in the history of the Winter Olympics, women made up **47% of participants out of 2,871 athletes**. This is the highest proportion ever recorded in the history of the Winter Games.

Similarly, the Italian delegation fielded **196 athletes**, with women accounting for **47%**.

RESULTS AND MEDALS

The sporting results also reflected this near parity in participation. **The 30 medals won by Italy were equally divided between men and women.**

However, it was the Italian female athletes who achieved the most prestigious results, standing out in key competitions.

Out of a total of 10 gold medals, 5 were won in women's individual events, 1 in a pairs event and 1 in a mixed team event. This figure highlights the

contribution of female athletes to the successes of the Italian delegation and reinforces the importance of women's competitions in the results of the Games.

Figure 12



Key Team Italy figures:

47%

female representation in the Italian Olympic delegation

7 out of 10

gold medals won at the Olympics by female athletes (5 in individual events, 1 in a pairs event and 1 in a mixed team event)

Figure 12
Milano Cortina 2026 Winter OG, Short track speed skating, 3000m relay Women - Final A, Gloria IORIATTI, Arianna SIGHEL, Chiara BETTI, Arianna FONTANA (ITA) 2nd. © 2026 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / DULAT, Tom

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The Milano Cortina 2026 Games

Record female participation and outstanding sporting achievements

The focus is on:

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PARALYMPICS: THE NUMBERS REMAIN UNBALANCED

The situation is different for the Paralympic Games. **Out of a total of 612 participants, 160 (26%) were female para-athletes. In addition, there were 84 guides**, mostly men, revealing the overall imbalance.

This pattern is also reflected in the Italian delegation, where women are in the minority: the Paralympic Team consisted of **38 male para-athletes and**

5 female para-athletes, plus 4 guides, of which one was a woman. Despite the small numbers, the results confirm the contribution of female paralympic athletes: of the **16 medals won by Italy (7 gold, 7 silver and 2 bronze), 4 were won by one woman**, skier Chiara Mazzel, an alpine skiing star. Overall, both the participation and results demonstrate that the female contribution, while significant, is still lower than that of men.

Key figures for the Italian Paralympic Team

12%

female para-athletes in the Italian Paralympic delegation, a figure lower than the international average

4

medals won by Italian Paralympic para-athlete Chiara Mazzel, with guide athletes Nicola Cotti Cottini and Fabrizio Casal

Figure 13
Matina Vozza and Ylenia Sabidussi, ski champions of the Italian Paralympic Winter Sports Federation (FISP). Photo from the exhibition "A Life in Sport: The Faces and Achievements of 100 Female Experts"
© Bracco Foundation / BRU-NEAU, Gerald

Figure 13



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The Milano Cortina 2026 Games

An overview: extensive television coverage focused on the competitions

The focus is on:

- OLYMPIC GAMES
- PARALYMPIC GAMES

A FOCUS ON SPORTS RESULTS

Between 6 and 22 February 2026, the seven main national TV newscasts dedicated **331 news stories** to the Milano Cortina Olympic Games, providing continuous TV coverage of the event that reported on both the sporting results and the wider context of the Games.

The distribution of news stories highlights the particularly significant role played by public-service broadcaster. **55% of stories** were broadcast on RAI newscasts, **while 37% were broadcast on Mediaset newscast and 8% on the Cairo Editore newscast.**

In terms of content, coverage focused primarily on competitions: **58% of news stories** directly concerned competitions, with a particular focus on the results achieved by the female athletes.

Within this share, **39% of stories** focused specifically on victories or qualifications, highlighting the importance of the competitive aspect and performances in

television coverage.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE OLYMPIC EVENT

The remaining 41% of news stories covered other aspects of the Games, including the opening and closing ceremonies, held in Milan and Verona respectively, as well as background stories, interesting facts and personal stories about the athletes. Overall, television coverage helped to bring Olympic sport back to the forefront of the national news agenda during the weeks of the Games.

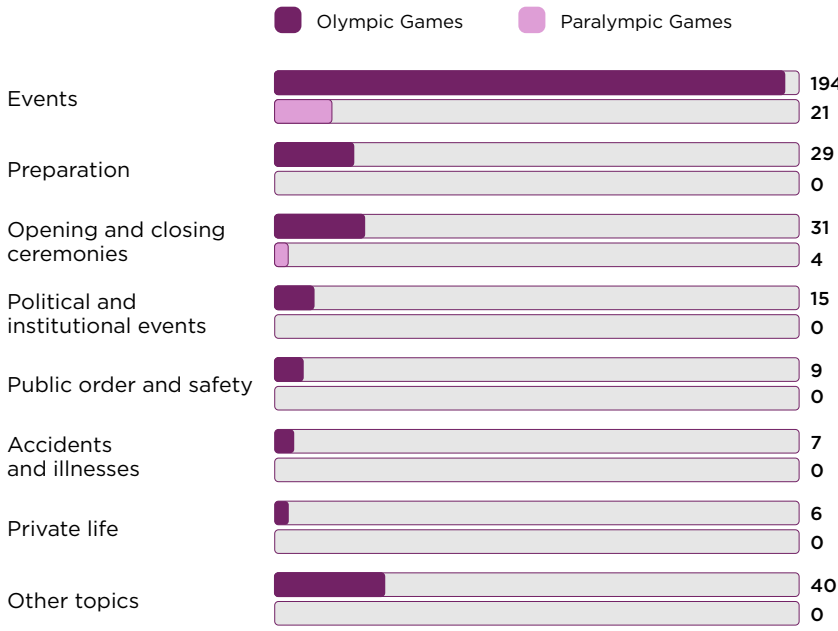
COVERAGE OF THE PARALYMPIC GAMES

Coverage of the Milano Cortina Paralympic Games was more limited. Between 6 and 15 March 2026, the seven main national newscasts devoted **25 news stories** to the event, against a backdrop also marked by international tensions that reshaped the priorities of the news agenda. The distribution of coverage

confirms the central role played by public-service broadcasters: **19 stories** were broadcast by RAI newscasts and 6 by LA7 news, while Mediaset newscast did not cover the event. The content focused primarily on the competitions: **21 out of 25 sto-**

ries covered the victories of the Italian Paralympic Team, while the remaining stories focused on the opening ceremony. The competitive aspect therefore remains central, albeit within a more limited media space.

News about the Olympic and Paralympic Games by topic



Sample: **356 NEWS STORIES**

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OLYMPIC GAMES

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The Milano Cortina 2026 Games

The language of the Winter Olympic Games: inclusive in form, but still full of gender stereotypes

CORRECTLY USED LANGUAGE

In most cases, the language used in television stories on the Winter Olympic Games was gender inclusive. **In 84% of the news stories analysed**, female and male athletes were referred to using appropriate linguistic forms, indicating a growing focus on the linguistic representation of women in sport.

USE OF THE 'OVEREXTENDED' MASCULINE

Despite this positive trend, **in 16% of the news stories**, the so-called 'overextended masculine' – the use of masculine plural forms to refer to both men and women indiscriminately – was still observed.

A recurring example is the expression 'gli azzurri', used in television stories to refer generically to the Italian team. In some cases, for example, stories refer to the 'three azzurri', also including the athlete Giulia Murada, or attribute medals won by both men and women to 'the azzurri'.

METAPHORS UNRELATED TO SPORT

Furthermore, **in 5% of the news stories**, sexist linguistic expressions were identified, often linked to the use of metaphors or nicknames that do not belong to the semantic domain of sport.

These include terms such as 'queen', 'heroine' or 'diva', which are used to celebrate the achievements of certain female athletes – for example, 'the queen of short track' in reference to Arianna Fontana – but which ultimately attribute sporting success to a symbolic dimension rather than to technical skill.

Key figures

84%

of news stories use inclusive language

95%

of news stories use non-sexist language

Sample: **331 NEWS STORIES**

Figure 14



Figure 14
Milano Cortina 2026
Winter OG, Biathlon, 10km
pursuit Women.
© 2026 / International
Olympic Committee (IOC) /
KINNO, Kohjira

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The Milano Cortina 2026 Games

The language of the Winter Olympic Games: inclusive in form, but still full of gender stereotypes

MOTHERHOOD AS A RECURRING NARRATIVE THEME

In some cases, the narrative also focused on biographical or family details. This is the case for speed skater Francesca Lollobrigida, who was described in various stories as a ‘flying mum’ or a ‘super mum’ after winning her Olympic medal.

The story of her embracing her three-year-old son received extensive coverage on television. However, this episode did not provide an opportunity to explore in depth the challenges that pregnancy and motherhood can pose for a female athlete’s sporting career.

More often, it has been incorporated into a narrative celebrating motherhood, which ultimately becomes one of the recurring elements in the media portrayal of female athletes. Overall, **81%** of the gender stereotypes identified in news stories concern women, particularly in relation to family life or physical appearance.

WHEN THE NARRATIVE CHALLENGES STEREOTYPES

Alongside these representations, some television stories also presented narratives that challenge traditional gender stereotypes. In particular, some stories focused on the athletes’ emotions, capturing moments of deep emotion or intense personal engagement following the competitions.

A notable example is that of Davide Ghiotto, the star of Italy’s victory in the speed skating team pursuit. Interviewed after the competition, the athlete said he was moved to see his son in the stands again, having not seen him for almost a month.

This reference to the athlete’s family life introduces an element into television coverage that is traditionally rarely seen in sport: fatherhood for male athletes, which is rarely discussed in competitive settings.

While motherhood is often highlighted as an integral part of

the sporting stories of individual female athletes, fatherhood appears sporadically and is never celebrated with the same emphasis as female athletes’

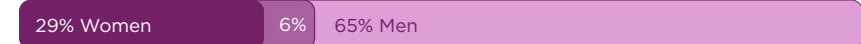
motherhood, which remains one of the most recurrent narrative elements in television coverage of the Games.

Who are the main figures in the news stories?

Stereotypes were identified in **16% of the news stories, in 81% of cases relating to women.**



10% of news stories challenge gender stereotypes through narratives that tend to deconstruct them, **particularly with regard to men (65% vs 29% for women and 6% for both genders).**



Some examples of reinforced female stereotypes

“Even without her son Tommaso, who is away from his **mother** this time, Francesca is happy.

“Her victory rewards her efforts to **bridge sport and motherhood.**

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The focus is on:

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PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Milano Cortina 2026 Games

Visibility and visual representation of athletes and sports in TV coverage

THE ROLE OF IMAGES

The visibility of sports and athletes in television coverage is also shaped by images, which direct the audience's attention to specific moments in competitions, athletes or sporting stories. Overall, the images used to cover the news of the Games were inclusive **in 83% of cases**.

The remaining 17% of stories without inclusive images are mainly due to the way the coverage is produced – such as live links or studio-read news items – which in some cases do not include the use of competition footage. In terms of content, **most images were found to be non-sexist (98%)**.

MORE BALANCED COVERAGE BETWEEN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S COMPETITIONS

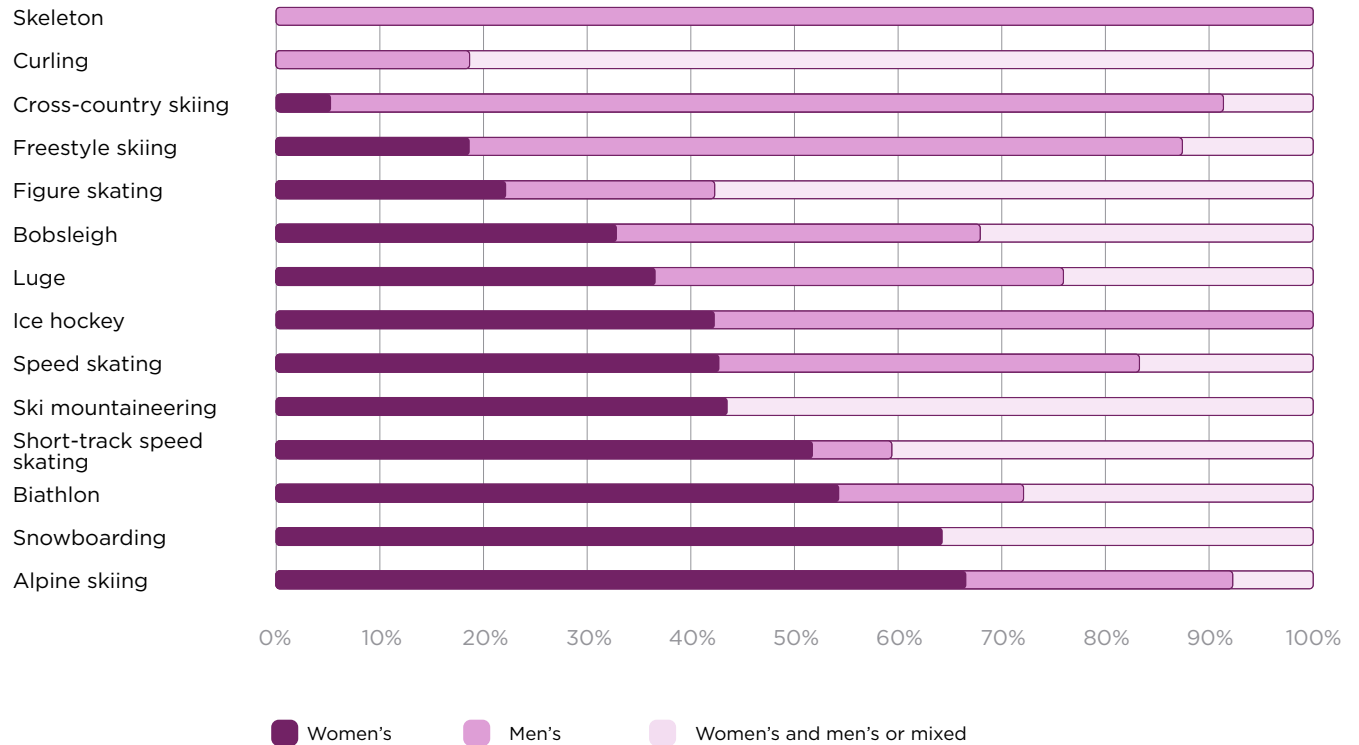
Television coverage of the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Games shows a relatively balanced representation of the various sports. Most news analysed covered the compe-

titions without a clear gender bias: **53% of the stories** covered both men's and women's disciplines, **while 24%** focused on women's competitions and **23%**

men's competitions. This finding suggests that the television coverage of the Games tended to portray the Olympic event as a shared sporting space, where

the performances of male and female athletes were represented within the same competitive context.

Gender of the sports disciplines covered



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DIFFERENCES IN THE VISIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLINES

Despite this overall balance, there are some discrepancies in the visibility of individual disciplines. In some disciplines, television coverage focused more on women's competitions.

This is the case, for example, in alpine skiing, snowboarding, biathlon, and short track speed skating, disciplines in which women's performances received particular attention on the news, partly due to the results achieved.

In other disciplines, however, television coverage focused more on men's competitions, such as in freestyle skiing, cross-country skiing, and ice hockey.

These differences appear to be linked both to the way in which certain disciplines have traditionally been covered by the media and the significance of the results achieved in competitions.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF FEMALE ATHLETES

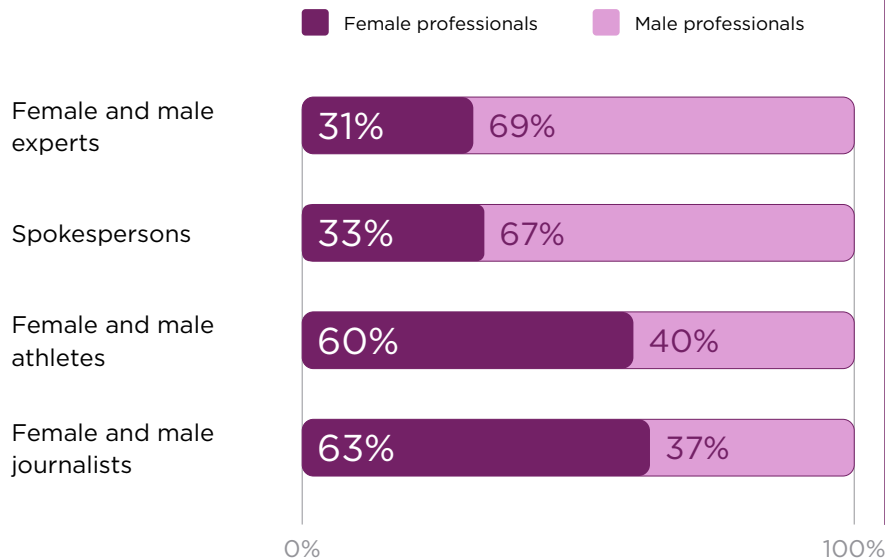
During the Milano Cortina Olympic Games, female athletes received greater visibility, accounting for **58% of media appearances, compared to 42%** for men. This figure is particularly significant when compared

with the **proportion of female participants in the Games (47%)**. Therefore, the increased visibility of female athletes can be interpreted as the result of a combination of factors: the strong presence of women in national delegations and the significance of the women's achievements.



Figure 15

Gender representation among interviewees



Key figures

53%

of news stories covered both men's and women's sports

58%

of media coverage focused on women

Sample: 331 NEWS STORIES

Figure 15
Milano Cortina 2026 Winter OG, Biathlon, 7.5km sprint Women - Dorothea WIERER (ITA). © 2026 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / MONTESANO, Chiara

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Who has a voice in covering the Winter Games: a balanced presence of women and men, but authoritative roles still predominantly held by men

A GOOD GENDER BALANCE AMONG THE PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Overall, the distribution of voices in television stories on the Milano Cortina Olympic Games appears balanced. **49% of the people interviewed are women and 51% are men**, indicating a broadly equal representation of the two genders in the television coverage.

This balance partly reflects the very structure of the Olympic Games, where the number of male and female athletes competing is relatively even, and media coverage tends to focus on the athletes themselves.

TECHNICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY REMAINS LARGELY MALE-DOMINATED

However, if we consider the roles held by people interviewed, some differences do emerge. Men continue to be interviewed more frequently in positions of authority, such as experts or institutional spokespersons.

Overall, **more men than women were interviewed in positions of authority: 68% compared to 32%**. This figure aggregates the main categories of institutional and technical voices featured in the coverage: among the experts interviewed, **69% were men and 31% women**, while among the institutional spokespersons, **67% were men and 33% women**.

These figures suggest that, even in a relatively balanced media environment such as that of the Olympic Games, the portrayal of technical and institutional authority continues to be predominantly associated with male figures.

WOMEN MORE PRESENT AS PROTAGONISTS AND AUTHORS OF THE NARRATIVE

In contrast, women are more frequently interviewed as individuals directly involved in the events covered by the news. When we specifically consider the individuals interviewed as the main figures in the news

stories (newsmakers), **the proportion of women stands at 54%**. This figure is even more marked when we look at interviews with athletes: **more female athletes who took part in the Winter Olympic Games were interviewed than male athletes (60% vs 40%)**. This figure reflects the prominence of women's performances during the Games and the greater

visibility achieved by women's competitions in the television coverage of the event.

Furthermore, in terms of journalistic production, **63% of the stories were produced by female journalists**, compared to **37% produced by male journalists**, also indicating a strong female presence in the production of news content.

Figure 16



Figure 16
Milano Cortina 2026 Winter OG, Short track speed skating, 3000m relay Women - Final B, team France (FRA), team People's Republic of China (CHN), team United States of America (USA), team Japan (JPN).
© 2026 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / DULAT, Tom

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The Paralympic Games on the news

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FOCUSED COVERAGE

Coverage of the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Games took place within a limited news space and was characterised by a highly selective approach to content creation.

Between 6 and 15 March, national newscasts devoted **25 news stories** to the event, **21 of which** focused on the victories of the Italian team. This focus tends to narrow the scope of the narrative, overshadowing other elements that contribute to defining the complexity of the Games: the organisational context, individual journeys, and the diversity of disciplines. The result is a concise narrative that is strongly focused on the competitive aspect but less detailed in terms of the event's diversity.

VISIBILITY AND HIERARCHIES

Within this framework, the distribution of visibility reveals the existence of marked hierarchies. Female athletes accounted for **26% of participants**

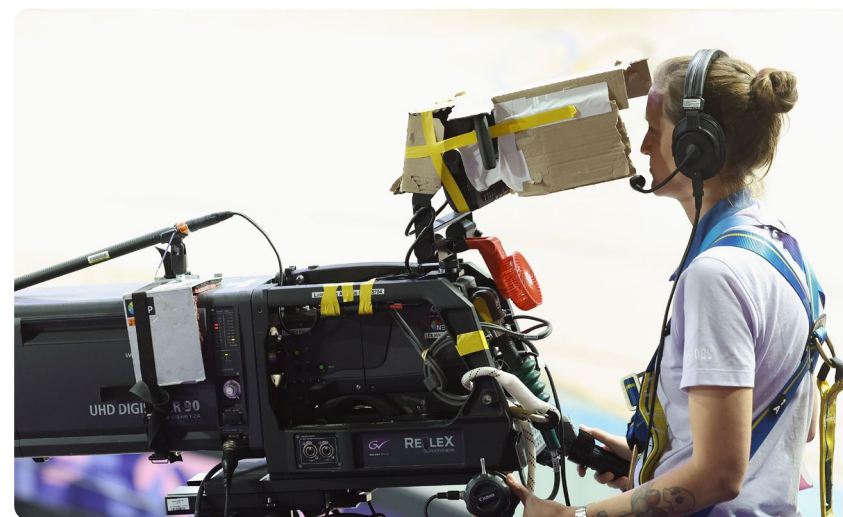
but were featured in only **14% of news stories**.

The selection of content helps to reinforce this trend: the disciplines and athletes featured most frequently were the ones in which the Italian team achieved its best results, leading to some figures being over-exposed while others receive less coverage.

Coverage of the competitions focused in particular on three disciplines – alpine skiing, cross-country skiing and snowboarding – of which only the first two included women's events.

The result is a portrayal in which the presence of female athletes is not only limited, but also heavily dependent on the very structure of the most widely covered disciplines and on the results achieved.

Figure 17



Gender distribution of sports covered

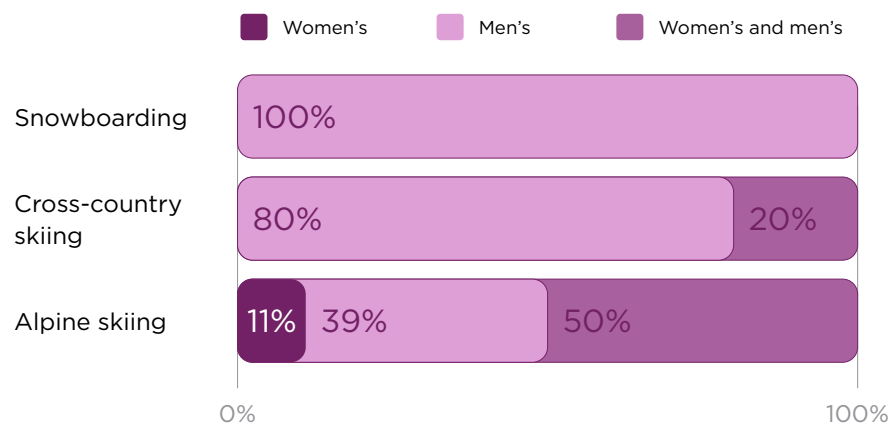


Figure 17
Paris 2024 OG, Vélodrome National - Behind the scenes. A cameraman. International
© 2024 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / HASSENSTEIN, Alexander

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THE QUALITY OF THE COVERAGE

In terms of quality, coverage of the Paralympic Games stands out for its strong focus on formal accuracy.

96% of the news stories use inclusive language, and **92% of the images** are consistent with respectful and non-discriminatory representation.

No sexist or discriminatory content was identified, while **16% of the news stories** included elements that helped to challenge entrenched stereotypes, particularly by covering the athletes' personal and relational lives.

However, this focus on the overall quality of language and images takes place within a narrative that is not very diverse, tending to favour a small number of individuals and perspectives and thereby limiting the overall plurality of the coverage.

THE VOICES OF THE PARALYMPIC GAMES

The construction of the narrative also depends on the individuals who produce and present it. The presence of women is limited, both among the people interviewed and among media professionals. **Of the 35 people interviewed, only 14% were women** – exclusively female athletes.

In contrast, women were absent from the roles of commentary, analysis, and institutional representation, which continue to be filled by male voices.

Even among those covering the Games, the distribution appears uneven: **60% of the stories, live links, and studio-read news items were produced by male journalists, while 40% were produced by female journalists.**

Generally speaking, the portrayal of women in the narrative focused on the sporting performance aspect, while remaining more limited in the roles that helped to shape and interpret the media discourse, highlighting a still significant imbalance in the construction of the voices and perspectives through which the Paralympics are covered.

Figure 18



Figure 18
Angela Menardi, Paralympic wheelchair curling athlete, Level 1 curling coach, Athlete Advisor for the Italian Chiaccio Sports Federation. Photo from the exhibition "A Life in Sport: The Faces and Achievements of 100 Female Experts"
© Bracco Foundation / BRU-NEAU, Gerald

Key figures

96%

of news stories use inclusive language

100%

of news stories use non-sexist images, while **92% use inclusive images**

16%

of news stories challenge gender stereotypes

Sample: **25 NEWS STORIES**

A look beyond the Games

04.

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The power of major events

How the representation of female athletes and women's competitions is changing

Figure 19
Milano Cortina 2026 Winter OG, Snowboard, snowboard cross team Mixed - Quarterfinals, Julia NIRANI-PEREIRA (FRA) and Eva ADAMCZYKOVA (CZE).
© 2026 / International Olympic Committee (IOC) / PERNET, Florence

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE GAMES

This research project was initiated to observe how sport is portrayed in media coverage, not only during the exceptional moments of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, when attention is strongly focused on sports and athletes from all over the world, but also in the intervening period, when sport once again takes centre stage in daily news and broader media narratives.

The analysis covered three distinct yet complementary periods: coverage of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the subsequent year of sports news coverage, and, finally, the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Analysing these periods together allowed us to better understand how sport is portrayed during major events and how that narrative surrounding female athletes changes over time.

THE NARRATIVE IMPACT

The Olympic Games have always been a platform for media amplification. During Paris 2024, coverage on Italian television newscasts demonstrated a balanced focus on women's and men's sport and a significant presence of female athletes in the narrative of the event.

During those days, disciplines, stories, and key figures that rarely feature in daily sports coverage became part of the media narrative, helping to broaden the public's view of sport.

An analysis of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games also provided valuable insights into how sport is represented in the media. Despite more limited coverage, the attention given to the Paralympic Games enabled us to observe specific narrative dynamics, including the persistence of stereotypes related to disability or gender, which clearly raise the issue of the quality of media coverage.

Figure 19



ORDINARY TIMES

When the focus shifts from major events to 'ordinary' sport, the picture changes. An analysis of the year following the Paris Games showed that television coverage returned to focusing on a handful of dominant sports and on figures who were already well-established in the media landscape.

In this specific context, the presence of women's sport and its leading figures returns to a position of reduced prominence, suggesting that the greater openness and visibility generated by the Games do not always translate into a genuine structural change in the way sport is covered.

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MILANO CORTINA 2026

The Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Games brought a wide variety of sports and athletes back into the spotlight of sports news, helping to further expand sports media coverage and its various forms.

In particular, the analysis highlighted an increase in the visibility of female athletes and women's sport within Italian newscasts; however, this has not always been accompanied by a similarly significant and consistent shift in terms of narrative and the ways in which they are portrayed in the media.

Despite these early signs of change, certain narrative approaches have persisted, perpetuating stereotypes or shifting the focus to aspects that are secondary and peripheral to the sporting context.

THE WINTER PARALYMPIC GAMES: A CASE THAT CHALLENGES THE NARRATIVE

The Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Games highlighted a distinctive feature of sports covering: even when the coverage was accurate, inclusive, and free from stereotypes, the visibility of female athletes

and their representation in narrative roles remained limited. In this regard, the case of the Paralympic Games showed that the quality of coverage alone is not sufficient to ensure balanced representation, highlighting the need to address not only the language used but also the structure and selection criteria that shape media narratives.

Figure 20



AN EVOLVING NARRATIVE: FROM OPENNESS TO SCALING BACK



Paris 2024

Major events increase the visibility of female athletes

Coverage of the Olympic and Paralympic Games featured a greater presence of women in sport and a wider range of disciplines and stories.

→ Inter-Olympic year

Women's sport once again relegated to the margins of media coverage

As sports coverage returned to its day-to-day routine, the presence of female athletes tended to diminish, and attention once again focused on a few dominant disciplines.

→ Milano Cortina 2026

The visibility of female athletes increased, but there are still issues with the way they are portrayed

The Winter Games brought women's sport back into the spotlight, yet narratives that continued to perpetuate stereotypes or marginalise the sporting achievements of female athletes persisted.

Figure 20
Tiziana Nasi, Vice-President of the Italian Paralympic Committee (CIP). Photo from the exhibition "A Life in Sport: The Faces and Achievements of 100 Female Experts"
© Bracco Foundation / BRU-NEAU, Gerald

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The power of major events

The challenge ahead

FROM VISIBILITY TO NARRATIVE CONTINUITY

Our observations highlighted a recurring pattern: the visibility of women in sport tends to increase at times of heightened media attention. On these occasions, coverage expands to encompass a greater variety of disciplines, stories, and key figures, helping

to broaden the public's view of the world of women's competition.

However, the shift from the exceptional nature of major events to the day-to-day world of sports news highlights just how often this openness is limited to the duration of the event itself. Overall, the

presence of female athletes in media coverage struggles to become established over time and to become an integral part of sports news.

One of the study's key issues emerges in the gap between the exceptional nature of major sporting events and the routine of daily coverage.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE NARRATIVE

In addition to the issue of continuity of representation, a broader question arises regarding the quality and structure of sports coverage. In many cases, attention shifts to aspects beyond the competitive performance itself, focusing instead on personal, aesthetic, or symbolic elements that tend to play down the central importance of sporting skills and results.

At the same time, women remain less present in roles of authority that define sports discourse – such as technical commentary, interpretation, and analysis – areas in which expertise continues to be predominantly represented by men.

These dynamics help to perpetuate an imbalance not only in the overall distribution of media attention, but also in the construction of the symbolic hierarchies that structure the narrative of sport.

Figure 21



Figure 21
Najla Aqdeir, middle-distance runner and running coach. Photo from the exhibition "A Life in Sport: The Faces and Achievements of 100 Female Experts"
© Bracco Foundation / BRU-NEAU, Gerald

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THE CHALLENGE FOR SPORTS COVERAGE

These findings raise the question of how sports coverage can become more gender-balanced, including, and perhaps most importantly, outside the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Creating fairer coverage means fully recognising female athletes as the stars of the competitions and highlighting their skills, journeys, and achievements without resorting to reductive interpretations. It also means broadening the range of perspectives within

sports discourse and increasing the presence of women in commentary, interpretation, and analysis roles.

In other words, it is a matter of moving from event-related visibility to genuine, consistent representation that reflects the true presence of women in contemporary sport. In this context, the IOC Guidelines represent a commendable example from which to initiate change, thanks to the recommendations that apply to all sports coverage, not just that related to the Games.

Figure 22



Figure 22
Antonella Bellutti, Activist, National Association of Women Athletes. Former track cyclist, multiple Olympic medalist. Photo from the exhibition “A Life in Sport: The Faces and Achievements of 100 Female Experts”
© Bracco Foundation / BRU-NEAU, Gerald

FROM CRITICAL ISSUES TO CHALLENGES

Critical issues

- **Intermittent visibility**
The presence of female athletes increases at major events but struggles to become established in everyday sports coverage.
- **Persisting stereotypes**
The narrative sometimes focuses on personal or symbolic aspects, diminishing the central role of sporting performance.
- **Imbalanced authority**
Women continue to be less represented in roles involving technical commentary, analysis, and interpretation.
- **Limited diversity**
Sports coverage continues to focus on a small number of disciplines, leaving less room for other stories and female athletes.

Challenges

- **Continuity of representation**
Ensure that the presence of women in sport remains consistent beyond major events.
- **Focus on sporting expertise**
Present female athletes based on their achievements, skills, and professional careers.
- **Diversity of voices**
Increase the presence of women in commentary, interpretation, and analysis roles.
- **Fairer and more informed coverage**
Create a narrative of sport that reflects the true presence of women in the contemporary sporting landscape.

