



## Pitching a Level Playing Field: Women and Leadership in Sports

Barbara Kotschwar and Tyler Moran

**Barbara Kotschwar**, former research fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, is a senior investment policy officer in the Global Trade and Competitiveness Practice at the World Bank. Kotschwar is also professor of Latin American studies and economics at Georgetown University, where she has taught courses on political economy and trade and integration in the Americas since 1998. She is author of Policy Brief 14-8: Women, Sports, and Development: Does It Pay to Let Girls Play? **Tyler Moran** has been a research analyst at the Peterson Institute since June 2013.

*Authors' note: This paper was made possible through generous support from EY. The authors thank, without implicating, their colleagues for their helpful and constructive comments.*

© Peterson Institute for International Economics. All rights reserved.

*“The scientific studies for this stuff are overwhelming—sports are good for girls. You get better grades. You make better decisions. You’re less likely to drink. You’re less likely to get pregnant. I mean, you can read the statistics up and down... [T]he sky is really the limit. I’m doing basketball. You can be a CEO of a company. You might even be the president of the United States someday. I think women are just scratching the surface of what we can accomplish.”*

—Becky Hammon, assistant coach, San Antonio Spurs and Women’s National Basketball Association all-star<sup>1</sup>

*“When examining the landscape today women are no longer an identity that any major or minor sport organization can ignore.”*

—C. Keith Harrison, associate professor, University of Central Florida, and former football player at West Texas A&M University

1. Doris Burke, “Impact 25: ESPNW Woman of the Year Becky Hammon on the Opportunity of a Lifetime,” ESPNW, December 17, 2014.

Sports is a narrow sector of the economy.<sup>2</sup> However, what happens in sports may have multiplier effects on gender equality in the broader society. A wide literature has established a strong link between girls’ participation in sports and positive outcomes for females in education, health, and positioning in the workforce.<sup>3</sup> Participating on a sports team is often cited by female executives as a significant factor in advancing leadership skills<sup>4</sup> (box 1 gives some anecdotal examples of female athletes who have risen to leadership ranks). Leaders and managers set the agenda for their industry and tend to set the tone for those they lead. For these reasons, the role of females within the leadership ranks of the sports world merits a closer look. This *Policy Brief* examines the international world of sports, focusing on the gender balance within the leadership ranks of major sporting bodies. While women’s presence in the leadership ranks of international sporting bodies has increased over the past decade, women continue to be underrepresented relative to their involvement in sports. Achieving a greater gender balance is important, given the economic benefits girls and women gain from participating in sports.

The *Brief* offers a number of suggestions for improving the corporate gender balance in international sports. These include encouraging the hosts of the next two Olympic Games to incorporate girls’ participation in sports and women’s role in sports leadership into their Olympic preparation plans; encouraging current female professional athletes to speak out and to strive for leadership positions; boosting the role of women in the middle levels of leadership, including having more female coaches at all levels; and implementing quotas or targets (and enforcing them) for international sports bodies.

2. Humphreys and Ruskei (2008) estimates that the size of the sports industry based on aggregate demand and aggregate supply ranged from \$44 billion to \$73 billion in 2005. This would represent about 0.33 to 0.56 percent of the 2005 US GDP (\$13,093 billion).

3. For a review of this literature, see Kotschwar 2014. For an example, see Duffo (2011).

4. See for example EY (2014). This survey of 400 female executives found that 52 percent played sports at the university level; over a third cite a link between sports participation and competitiveness in their own careers, and 75 percent say that a candidate’s sports background has a positive influence on hiring decisions.

### Box 1 Female managers in professional sports

How do women rise to the top in professional sports? For some it is a family business, and many owners and executives inherit the position from their families. But in US professional sports, a striking number of top female executives are former professional or competitive athletes. Examples include:

- Gillian Zucker, former president of the Auto Club Speedway and current president of business operations for the Los Angeles Clippers, swam competitively at Hamilton College.
- Kim Ng, senior vice-president for Baseball Operations with Major League Baseball, played college softball at the University of Chicago.
- Barbara Underhill, the Toronto Maple Leafs skating coach, was a five-time Canadian figure skating champion and 1984 World Champion pairs figure skater. She is the first former figure skater hired by an NHL team.
- Nancy Lieberman, the first female head coach of a men's NBA-affiliated team and assistant general manager for the Texas Legends, was inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in 1996.
- Val Ackerman, first WNBA president, was a basketball player for the University of Virginia, and her successor, Donna Orender, was an all-star player for the Women's Pro Basketball League.

## INCREASING VIEWERSHIP OF AND PARTICIPATION IN WOMEN'S SPORTS

The world of sports has long since passed the point at which it could ignore women. The Women's World Cup of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), which took place throughout Canada in summer 2015, broke TV viewing records, exceeding the expected billion viewers.<sup>5</sup> The tournament generated 9 billion tweets, and FIFA's YouTube channel recorded its most monthly views ever (47 percent more than the 2014 Men's World Cup, which drew 19 million views).<sup>6</sup> The final game, which pitted the US women's team against Japan, drew the highest US market rating ever for a soccer game.

This summer's high viewership of women's sports is not a fluke: Four years earlier, the US-Japan women's final also broke records, ranking as the most watched soccer match in cable history and the sixth most-viewed soccer telecast ever in the

United States at that time.<sup>7</sup> Attendance and TV viewers for the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), while still far from the viewership of the all-male NBA, have also grown. Females represent more than a third of the 14 million audience for major sports events.<sup>8</sup> Recent Super Bowls counted women as 46 percent of their viewing audience.<sup>9</sup>

5. Alice Magowan, "Women's World Cup 2015: One billion TV viewers expected," *BBC Sport*, June 6, 2015; and Bill Chappell, "US Women Shatter TV Ratings Record for Soccer with World Cup Win," NPR, July 6, 2015. By comparison, the Blackhawks-Lighting Game (Game 1) of the Stanley Cup finals (an important hockey match in Canada) attracted about 5.5 million viewers. The 2015 Super Bowl (American football) averaged about 114 million viewers.

6. "Key figures from the FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015," FIFA.com, July 7, 2015.

7. An average of 13.5 million viewers watched Japan beat the US women. See "Women's World Cup Final draws 13.5 million viewers in US," Nielsen.com, July 19, 2011.

8. Tom Van Riper, "Women comprise large part of sports audience," *Forbes.com*, September 30, 2011, [http://sports.yahoo.com/top/news:slug=ys-forbes-sports\\_women\\_watch\\_most\\_093011](http://sports.yahoo.com/top/news:slug=ys-forbes-sports_women_watch_most_093011) (accessed on December 15, 2014). Breaking this down by sport, women represent 30 percent of the 2012–13 NBA season; 30 percent of the 2013 Major League Baseball (MLB) regular season; 32 percent of the National Hockey League (NHL) 2012–13 regular season; 37 percent of the 2013 National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) Sprint Cup series; 35 percent of the Professional Golfers Association (PGA) 2013 regular season; 32 percent of the 2013 Major League Soccer (MLS) regular season, and 34 percent of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) 2013–14 bowl games. Note that this data holds for the United States. Not all countries see the same trend; in Iran, for example, women are banned from attending major sports events. These statistics are based on data from TV by the Numbers, displayed in Derek Thompson, "Which Sports Have the Whitest/Richest/Oldest Fans?" *Atlantic*, February 10, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/02/which-sports-have-the-whitest-richest-oldest-fans/283626/> (accessed on November 30, 2015).

9. Kat Gorden, "Women are the Dominant Media Voice During the Super Bowl," *Adweek*, January 27, 2014, <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/women-are-dominant-media-voice-during-super-bowl-155227> (accessed on December 14, 2014).

**Table 1 Gender distribution in leadership roles in major US sports federations, percent**

	NFL	MLS	MLB	NBA	WNBA
League office: Professional employees	30	37	30	41	79
Majority owners	0	0	16	6	36
Head coaches	0	0	0	0	42
Assistant coaches	0	0	n.a.	0	68
CEO/President	0	0	0	7	36
General manager	0	0	0	0	40
Vice president	15	14	18	17	23
Senior administration	19	20	27	21	37
Professional administration	27	25	27	35	42
Head athletic trainers	0	0	4	0	54

n.a. = not available; NFL = National Football League; MLS = Major League Softball; MLB = Major League Baseball; NBA = National Basketball Association; WNBA = Women's National Basketball Association

Source: University of Central Florida TIDES Racial and Gender Report Cards for most recent year available (2014–15 for NBA and MLB; 2013–14 for all others).

Females also constitute a large and growing share of the sports consumption market. In 2014, they made 21 percent of all US athletic wear purchases. Major athletic wear companies are increasingly orienting marketing and merchandise toward this growing clientele and are beginning to use popular women's sports to market to men: In April 2015 Nike began selling US women's national soccer team jerseys in men's sizes.<sup>10</sup>

Women are not only watching more sports and buying more sports gear, they are also playing more sports. Since the implementation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, girls in the United States have been catching up to their male peers.<sup>11</sup> In 2013–14, the number of girls involved in high school athletics was three quarters of the number of high school boys.<sup>12</sup> Women's college sports have also grown, propelled by increased participation in women's hockey, lacrosse, rugby, and other sports. According to the National Sporting Goods Association, female participation in the top 50 sports has increased steadily, and the University of Minnesota's Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport reports that 40 percent of American athletes are female.<sup>13</sup>

10. Ira Boudway, "Women are now in the driver's seat in the sports apparel market," *Bloomberg Business*, April 22, 2015; and John Kell, "Nike makes a big push into the fast-growing women's segment," *Fortune*, October 22, 2014, <http://fortune.com/2014/10/22/nike-women-business/> (accessed on December 14, 2014).

11. For a more detailed analysis of these trends, see Stevenson (2007) and Stevenson (2010).

12. The annual High School Athletics Participation Survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) recorded 3,267,664 girls participating in sports during the 2013–14 time period along with 4,527,994 boys.

13. Figures quoted in Drew Harwell, "Women are one of the sporting-goods

## WHERE ARE THE WOMEN LEADERS IN SPORTS?

But missing from this increasingly equal sports picture is a proportional number of women in leadership positions in major US sports leagues. Table 1, which depicts the percentage of women in such roles, illustrates this point dramatically. Females make only marginal appearances as assistant coaches or general managers and comprise less than a quarter of senior administrative positions in the men's leagues.

This past year has seen some positive gains for women in major league sports leadership. Last year, Becky Hammon became the first female assistant NBA coach, for the San Antonio Spurs, and this year the first female head coach at the Summer League. This year the Arizona Cardinals hired Jen Welter as the first female coach of a National Football League (NFL) team. These women are highly qualified: Hammon is a seven-time WNBA all-star and a two-time Olympian with a university degree in exercise and sports science. Welter holds a PhD in psychology and a master's degree in sports psychology and has played on several professional football teams as well as on the gold-winning national team at the Women's World Championship. While these women are unusual for their credentials, they are becoming less so as women have caught up with men in educational attainment and labor force participation and, increasingly, playing time. *Time* magazine counters one popular argument against allowing female coaches for men's teams—that the women have no experience playing on

industry's biggest-growing markets—and one of its most ignored," *Washington Post*, October 14, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/business/wp/2014/10/14/a-12-year-old-basketball-player-complained-about-there-being-no-girls-in-her-sports-catalog-the-problem-was-even-worse/> (accessed on December 14, 2014).

an NBA or NFL team—by noting that neither Vince Lombardi nor Joe Gibbs played on an NFL team.<sup>14</sup>

Women still have a long way to go. Welter has been hired as an intern and Hammon as an assistant coach. Even in the WNBA, whose players are exclusively female, little more than a third of senior administration and about 40 percent of professional administrative posts are held by women. Despite their increased participation in sports and significant share of the sports consumer base, women remain largely absent from the leadership ranks.

### Four decades of Title IX has helped build up a cohort of professional women with extensive sports experience.

Sports is a specialized world, long dominated by men, so this gender imbalance may not be surprising. These numbers, however, are not only out of line with women's active participation in sports, they are also at variance with the growing prominence in the world of management outside sports. Four decades of Title IX has helped build up a cohort of professional women with extensive sports experience. According to a study by the International Labor Organization (ILO 2015), 43 percent of all managers in the United States are female—far more than women's share of professional and senior administration posts in four of the five major sports leagues, as depicted in table 1. A lack of practical and professional knowledge on the part of women therefore cannot be used to explain away the gender imbalance in leadership in high-level sports. This phenomenon seems to be replicated on an international scale, although data on sports participation is scarce in most countries.

### WOMEN, LEADERSHIP, AND THE INTERNATIONAL SPORTS WORLD

Women participated in the Olympics for the first time in Paris in 1900. The 22 women who did so made up just over 2 percent of the athletes representing their countries in the Games and were limited to five sports.<sup>15</sup> Since this modest beginning, the involvement of women in the Olympic movement has changed significantly at all levels.<sup>16</sup> As of 2012, women compete in all

14. "Jen Welter, the new intern coach for the Arizona Cardinals, has a PhD in Psychology," *Time.com*, July 29, 2015.

15. Those sports were tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrianism, and golf.

16. Noland and Stahler (2014). This was not a smooth transition: Pierre de Coubertin, head of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), sent a letter to male athletes in 1928 warning them of the dangers of allowing women to

Olympic sports and now make up more than 40 percent of the competitors in both the Winter and Summer Games.

Moving up the leadership ranks of the sporting industry, however, reveals a less dynamic trajectory. No women served on the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the governing body for the Games, until Norway's Pirjo Haeggman and Flor Isava-Fonseca from Venezuela joined in 1981, 87 years after the IOC was established. No women served on the IOC's executive board until Flor Isava-Fonseca was elected to the board in 1990. In 1997 Anita DeFrantz became vice president, the highest rank attained by a female in the organization's 121 years.<sup>17</sup> While more women have since joined the governing and administrative bodies of the Olympic organization, the IOC itself has identified the gender imbalance as an issue of concern (IOC 2014). As of December 2014, 4 out of 15 executive board members and about 23 percent of the IOC members are women.<sup>18</sup> Recognizing the lack of women in international sports administration, a number of international bodies and meetings have emerged to examine and promote gender balance in sports (box 2).

In 1997, as part of its Women and Sport policy, the IOC established targets for women's membership in the executive committees of National Olympic Committees (NOCs): Women were to hold at least 10 percent of executive decision-making positions by December 2001 and at least 20 percent by December 2005. About 60 percent of NOCs have met the first goal, far fewer the second. The IOC commissioned a study by Loughborough University (Henry and Robinson 2009) on women's roles in the decision-making bodies of NOCs and International Federations (IFs). The study found that barriers continued to prevent women from accessing decision-making positions and that women continued to be underrepresented in sports governing bodies.

### TOWARDS A MORE GENDER-BALANCED SPORTS WORLD?

Noland, Kotschwar, and Moran (2016, forthcoming) assesses corporate leadership gender balance for a large data set of international firms. The data show that educational and professional opportunities for women, political space for women, paternity leave, and proactive national policies had positive effects

compete in future Olympic Games, and some argue that distaste over women's participation was a factor in Coubertin's decision to step down from the organization he had founded (see Teezel 2013, 100).

17. DeFrantz's term ended in 2001; in 2004 Gunilla Lindberg was elected vice president.

18. Nawal El Moutawakel from Morocco is a vice president and Gunilla Lindberg from Sweden, Claudia Bokel from Germany, and Ani DeFrantz from the United States are members (IOC 2014).

### **Box 2 International sports gender balance initiatives**

The first World Conference on Women and Sport was held May 5–8, 1994, in Brighton, UK. At this meeting, the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) was formed to increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels, including leadership. To date, the IWG has convened six World Conferences, which have resulted in the promulgation of the 1994 Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport (now the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration on Women and Sport). The Brighton Declaration sets out a number of principles for organizations, federations, governments, authorities, and other entities that are responsible for or influence the conduct, development, or promotion of sport to follow. Signatories pledge best efforts to:

- ensure that all women and girls have the opportunity to participate in sport in a safe and supportive environment that preserves the rights, dignity, and respect of the individual;
- increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles;
- ensure that the knowledge, experiences, and values of women contribute to the development of sport; and
- promote the recognition by women of the intrinsic value of sport and its contribution to personal development and a healthy lifestyle.

As of the Sixth IWG World Conference on Women and Sport held in June 2014 in Helsinki, 416 sport organizations worldwide had endorsed the Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport. For a list of these signatories, see <http://www.federarco.es/mujer-y-deporte/documentacion/94-declaracion-de-brighton/file>.

on female leadership. At the firm level, greater board size and the presence of a female CEO were positive factors, and more women on the board increased the likelihood of having a female CEO. The question is whether similar factors affect female leadership in the world of sports.

Examining the gender balance in leadership positions of the NOCs provides an ideal starting point. NOCs play a leading role in the international Olympic movement: They organize their country's participation in the Olympic Games and are involved in the development of athletes and the training of coaches and officials. They thus affect the sports environment at the highest level and can be viewed as local representatives of the wider Olympic movement.

Data on the top positions—president and secretary general, or equivalent—for all 205 NOCs are listed on the IOC website. In 2015, women held few leadership positions: 6 percent of NOC presidents and 13 percent of secretary general positions were held by women. Given that women have made up more

than 20 percent of the Olympic athletes since the early 1970s, it is likely that a large enough cadre of former athletes exists to field more than this marginal representation among top executives.

Since the top positions of NOCs do not tell the whole story, information on gender representation on their executive boards was also examined.<sup>19</sup> Of the 79 NOCs for which gendered leadership data exists, five have no women on their board. Of the rest, just over a quarter have only one female

19. Some NOCs clearly present board information. Many others, however, either do not include this information on their websites or do not make it available in a language familiar to the authors. In such cases, press releases or other official information listing board membership available on the Internet were used. Where an executive was not identified with the titular “Mr.” or “Ms./Mrs.,” the gender was assessed by using either an internet search for the person's name and title or a database that categorizes first names as strongly male/female, weakly male/female, or neutral. The database, created for a C program called genderReader, is available on github at [https://github.com/cstuder/genderReader/blob/master/gender.c/nam\\_dict.txt](https://github.com/cstuder/genderReader/blob/master/gender.c/nam_dict.txt).

**Table 2 Gender balance in NOCs across the world**

Rank	Country	Date of recognition	Female board directors	Male board directors	Percent board directors, female	Board size (number of directors)	WEF GGG index	Percent female corporate board members	Percent female executives	Female medals, 2012 Olympics
	Average	1944	3	11	21	14	0.713	12	17	5
	Average, top 10	1937	6	7	45	13	0.756	18	20	9
	Average, bottom 10	1954	1	18	2	19	0.675	11	17	2
<b>Top 10</b>										
1	Estonia	1991	5	4	55.56	9	0.702	16.7	24.6	0
2	Norway	1900	7	6	53.85	13	0.837	40.2	20.1	1
3	Brazil	1935	9	10	47.37	19	0.694	8.6	9.3	6
4	Australia	1895	6	7	46.15	13	0.741	7.7	13.9	20
5	Sweden	1913	5	6	45.45	11	0.817	21.5	20.8	1
6	Bermuda	1936	4	6	40.00	10	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0
7	Latvia	1991	6	9	40.00	15	0.769	25.3	35.5	0
8	Namibia	1991	4	6	40.00	10	0.722	20.0	25.0	0
9	New Zealand	1919	4	6	40.00	10	0.777	13.9	14.3	5
10	United States	1894	6	10	37.50	16	0.746	12.2	16.0	58
<b>Bottom 10</b>										
70	Thailand	1950	1	21	4.55	22	0.703	19.0	28.3	2
71	Czech Republic	1993	1	24	4.00	25	0.674	14.0	14.3	5
72	India	1927	1	27	3.57	28	0.646	8.5	13.1	2
73	Poland	1919	1	33	2.94	34	0.705	13.0	18.6	5
74	United Arab Emirates	1980	1	37	2.63	38	0.644	11.1	2.7	0
75	Cambodia	1995	0	11	0.00	11	0.652	n.a.	n.a.	0
76	Greece	1895	0	9	0.00	9	0.678	11.2	21.5	1
77	Nigeria	1951	0	8	0.00	8	0.639	12.5	17.0	0
78	Panama	1947	0	9	0.00	9	0.720	7.4	8.0	0
79	Vietnam	1979	0	5	0.00	5	0.692	0.0	25.0	0

n.a. = not available; NOC = National Olympic Committee; WEF = World Economic Forum; GGG = global gender gap

Sources: National Olympic Committee websites, World Economic Forum, PIIE corporate gender balance database, and Noland and Stahler (2014) Olympics database.

board member. Thirty-nine have met the IOC goal of having 20 percent female board members by the year 2015.

To illustrate some of the differences in NOCs, table 2 lists the top and bottom 10 gender-balanced NOCs, along with their country's associated value on a number of indicators. All of the top 10 have close to 40 percent women on their boards—mirroring the average female participation rate in the Olympics. The bottom 10 NOCs all have less than 5 percent female participation on their boards. Top gender-balanced NOC boards are in countries that have, on average, a higher score on the World Economic Forum's global gender gap index, a higher percentage of women board members in their corporate sector, and a slightly higher percentage overall of women in the executive ranks of their companies. These boards tend to be smaller,

by six members, than the 10 bottom gender-balanced NOCs. They also tend to have more female medalists than the bottom.

Only a weak relationship exists between the gender balance of a country's corporate leadership and its NOC. As such, it can be assumed that some common country characteristics will prevail. Countries with cultures or policies more conducive to women's leadership roles are also more conducive to promoting women's athletics and to funneling elite athletes or other qualified females up the corporate sporting ladder. However, in this case industry effects tend to predominate. Table 3 sets out the correlation coefficients of these variables with NOC gender balance.

Female participation on NOC boards is correlated with the World Economic Forum's global gender gap index score for

**Table 3 Correlation coefficients for NOC gender balance and other variables**

	NOC female board directors	NOC female board directors (percent)	Board size (number of directors)
NOC female board directors	1.00	0.74	0.36
NOC female board directors (percent)	0.74	1.00	-0.21
Board size (number of directors)	0.36	-0.21	1.00
WEF GGG index	0.26	0.44	-0.24
Corporate boards, percent female	0.23	0.27	0.05
Corporate executives, percent female	0.05	0.06	-0.08
Female medals, 2012 Olympics	0.43	0.14	0.30

NOC = National Olympic Committee; WEF = World Economic Forum; GGG = global gender gap

Note: Shaded figures are significant.

Sources: National Olympic Committee websites, World Economic Forum, PIIE corporate gender balance database, and Noland and Stahler Olympics database.

the corresponding country and with the gender balance on a country's corporate boards. In many cases, former Olympians are favored for inclusion on NOC boards, so a country that generates more female Olympians might enable more women to participate at the leadership level.

In addition to Olympic leadership, the gender balance in International Federations (IFs) and national sports organizations (NSOs) was also examined. NSOs are the national governing bodies for particular sports. IFs are responsible for the administration of competitions in their sport throughout the world and set the guidelines for their sport. NSOs administer that sport nationally. For example, the international federation overseeing the Women's World Cup of soccer is the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA); the Canadian Soccer Association is the NSO that oversees soccer in Canada. Annex 1 lists the country data for NSOs; annex 2 lists the IFs for which information is available.

In the sample of 39 countries, 23—or nearly 60 percent—had 20 percent or more women on their NSO boards on average. Women make up 8 percent of chairs and 20 percent of the CEOs for the 90 IFs surveyed. Women make up about 20 percent of NSO directors across the board. In the gender distribution of NSO boards by region, only South Asia, with 10 NSOs, averages lower than 20 percent female board representation (figure 1). All NSOs in North America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Oceania have reached the Brighton Declaration target of at least 20 percent women on their boards.

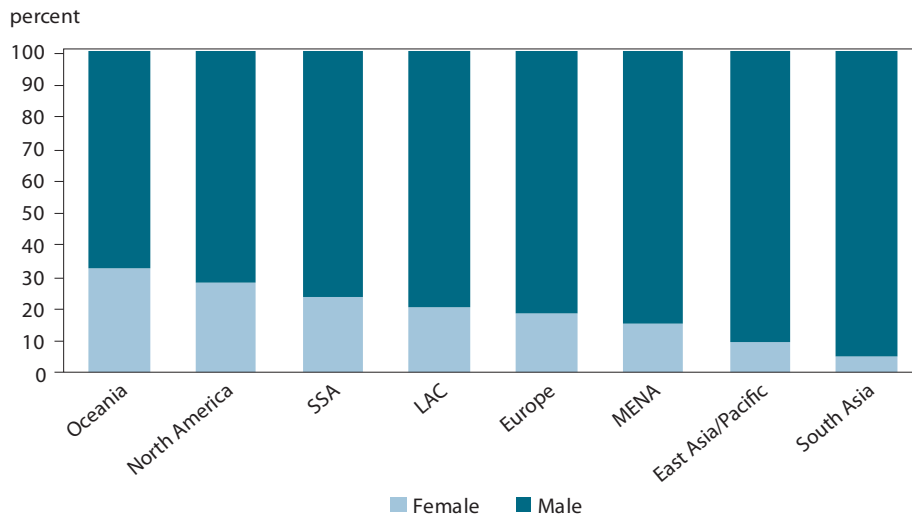
This breakdown is not surprising. Countries that give more opportunities to their women tend to have a greater female representation in their sports governing bodies. Countries with a corporate culture that aims more towards gender balance

tend to have more women on their national sports boards; for example, Norway, which has a 40 percent quota for females on corporate boards has a nearly 40 percent female NOC board. And countries with more female Olympic medalists tend to have a greater number of women on their NOC boards, though not necessarily a greater percentage of women on those boards.

This last element is important. Anecdotal evidence suggests a demonstration effect: Seeing other women excel in sports spurs girls already interested in those sports to excel. Seeing qualified women in sports leadership positions—and, compellingly, seeing female athletes with a proven performance record accepted into the leadership ranks within their sports—can serve as a strong motivator for female athletes climbing up the sports ladder (Weed 2009). The important multiplier effects that sports can have for girls and women, and the important effects that positive female outcomes can have for economic growth (Agenor and Canuto 2012), makes promoting gender equality in sports leadership a wise societal investment.

While only 20 percent of the IFs listed in annex 2 have signed the Brighton Declaration, selected IFs have undertaken significant measures to bring women into their leadership ranks. Both the International Biathlon Union (IBU) and the International Triathlon Union (ITU) incorporate gender equality into their contracts, mandating that prize money and media exposure must be equal for men and women's events. The ITU offers a subsidy instead of imposing a quota: Delegations from national federations are generally represented by two delegates—but each delegation can earn an extra delegate by appointing a woman (i.e., if the team has one woman delegate, then the delegation is allowed three delegates; if two are women, they may bring four). The International Cycling Union (UCI) also incorporates

**Figure 1 Gender balance in NSOs by region**



NSO = national sports organization; SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa; LAC = Latin American and Caribbean; MENA = Middle East and North Africa

Source: Sydney Scoreboard, available at: <http://www.sydney scoreboard.com/>.

gender equity in its equal-opportunity recruitment plan, which has resulted in 49 percent of its staff and over 35 percent of its managers and directors being female (EU 2014).

Some IFs have neither signed the Brighton Declaration nor taken any significant moves to bolster gender equity. FIFA is probably the most famously resistant to gender balance. The current scandal engulfing soccer’s most important organization is an opportunity for FIFA to adopt greater transparency in its leadership and to reform its board so that more than one token woman participates in executive decisions. The popularity of the Women’s World Cup, the number of girls playing soccer, and the female soccer fan base should all be factors encouraging FIFA to seriously consider improving the gender balance in its leadership. The literature does not provide a clear causality, but there is a trend in both business and political science literature that associates female leadership with less corruption and greater transparency, both of which would greatly benefit this organization.

**HOW CAN THE INTERNATIONAL SPORTS WORLD BOLSTER FEMALE LEADERSHIP RANKS?**

Quotas and targets appear effective in advancing women in the international sports leadership ranks. Looking back to table 2, the average participation of females on NOC boards in the sample is 21 percent, compared to 12 percent for corporations in the same sample. However, the 20 percent target, while helping to equalize access to leadership positions, still falls short of matching the percentage of women participating in sports.

And quotas are often controversial, sometimes accompanied by allegations that candidates in the quota group lack qualifications. Such policies must be accompanied by corresponding measures that help assure that women gain the experience needed to serve as leaders and have access to mechanisms, such as leadership networks and mentors, that are key to boosting their ascension into leadership ranks.

In the corporate world, women’s education and labor force outcomes relative to those of men indicate that the main barrier to greater gender balance is at the point of promotion to leadership. A relatively equal (and sometimes larger) pool of female talent graduates and enters the workforce where men and women find entry level jobs at the same pace, after which an ever-increasing gender gap is witnessed, with women disappearing as the cohort climbs the ranks. Evidence from the United States suggests that female leadership in sports faces similar constraints. Barriers to women’s entry into the coaching ranks, for example, are evident, as discussed below. Unfortunately, a lack of international data similar to that in the United States prevents international comparisons.

Great strides have been made in gender equity in sports participation in the United States. Detailed data from the US Department of Education’s Equity in Athletics Data Analysis Cutting Tool, set out in table 4, shows that female participation in college sports is roughly 42 percent that of males.<sup>20</sup> If all

20. This varies, of course, by sport; some sports (field hockey, softball, synchronized swimming, and badminton) are played by only women, and others (football and baseball) are limited to men.



**Table 4 US college varsity sports participants, by gender, 2013**

<b>Varsity teams</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent female</b>
Badminton	0	130	130	100
Equestrian	3	1,592	1,595	100
Field hockey	0	5,757	5,757	100
Softball	0	30,733	30,733	100
Synchronized swimming	0	62	62	100
Beach volleyball	37	640	677	95
Volleyball	2,562	26,513	29,075	91
Gymnastics	300	1,695	1,995	85
Sailing	72	275	347	79
Rifle	24	85	109	78
Rowing	2,826	7,442	10,268	72
Bowling	722	1,155	1,877	62
Archery	48	71	119	60
Swimming and diving	7,101	8,816	15,917	55
Water polo	1,607	1,812	3,419	53
Fencing	593	649	1,242	52
Tennis	9,963	10,679	20,642	52
All track combined	54,578	56,681	111,259	51
Skiing	460	454	914	50
Soccer	37,742	37,442	75,184	50
Basketball	32,176	28,250	60,426	47
Squash	422	355	777	46
Lacrosse	13,592	10,592	24,184	44
Weight lifting	100	77	177	44
Rodeo	1,137	715	1,852	39
Table tennis	73	46	119	39
Golf	12,161	6,542	18,703	35
Ice hockey	4,254	2,093	6,347	33
Wrestling	9,584	279	9,863	3
Baseball	55,341	0	55,341	0
Football	89,196	0	89,196	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>365,257</b>	<b>269,862</b>	<b>635,119</b>	<b>42</b>
Single-gender sports	144,537	36,682	181,219	20
<b>Excluding single-gender sports</b>	<b>220,720</b>	<b>233,180</b>	<b>453,900</b>	<b>51</b>

Source: US Department of Education's Equity in Athletics Data Analysis Cutting Tool.

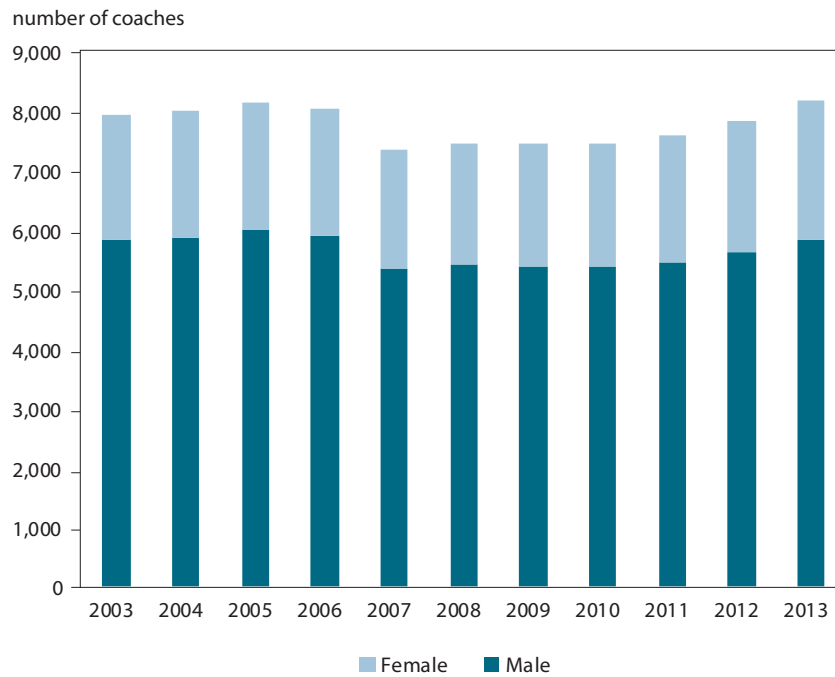
of the all-female or all-male sports are excluded, then women make up slightly more than half of all college varsity athletes.

Greater female participation in sports has not translated as well into gains in coaching and administrative positions. A growing base of female coaches, like a growing base of female middle managers, can provide a pool of expertise that can be tapped for leadership positions. But the female share of college

head coaches in the United States has only grown from 26 to 29 percent between 2003 and 2013 (figure 2), and female part-time coaches have remained steady at about 20 percent.

This picture becomes more interesting when the coaching positions are disaggregated. Women represented 53 percent of full-time coaches for women's teams in 2013—up from 49 percent in 2003. When it comes to leading men, however,

**Figure 2 Gender distribution of US college head coaches, 2003–13**



Source: US Department of Education’s Equity in Athletics Data Analysis Cutting Tool.

female coaches have lost ground, dropping from 2 percent of full-time head coaches in 2003 to 0.1 percent (6 coaches out of 3,797) in 2013.

This gender imbalance in the US coaching ranks is replicated on the international stage. At the 2012 London Olympics, only 11 percent of accredited coaches were female. The middle leadership ranks offer the sports world an opportunity to achieve greater gender balance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Women’s participation in athletics and their presence in the leadership ranks of sporting bodies have improved greatly. Much remains to be done, however. Accomplishing greater gender balance in sports is important, not just for generic arguments for equality but because of the importance sports have in furthering women’s individual potential and their ability to bolster their society. If playing sports has positive health, education, and workforce effects for girls, then encouraging their role in sports is also important. If treating women well is good for the economy, then this gives additional impetus to bolster female sports participation—at all levels.

As such, the following recommendations would support these goals.

- Pyeongchang and Tokyo, the sites of the next Olympic games, are in countries struggling to advance economically and bolster anemic growth. Both Korea and Japan have famously low female participation rates in the workforce—which does nothing to help growth—and among the lowest levels of female leadership in the world. Both hosts should make hosting the Games an opportunity to call for greater female participation in the upper management of sporting bodies. This would send a strong signal to the sports world in countries actively trying to recruit talented women into their own professional and leadership ranks.
- The demonstration effect is important. Encouraging female participation in athletics is also important. The more girls participate in sports and the more women are sent to the Olympics, the more likely they will end up in leadership positions and therefore be able to help build the infrastructure that will allow other girls to replicate their path—and to do so with fewer hurdles in their way. Female athletes who have risen to positions of leadership should be encouraged to create a public presence and to serve as mentors to women in the middle ranks.
- The sports world should pay attention to the middle ranks of leadership: coaches, assistant coaches, managers, and other policy officials. Mentoring programs could be put

in place to help female athletes forge a path to leadership through coaching and participation in decision-making positions.

- Targets or quotas are a means to level the playing field. The sports sector, which at least partly subscribes to a goal of augmenting female participation, outperforms the overall corporate sector in terms of female representation in leadership ranks. Worries abound that implementing enforceable quotas or targets will have negative external effects such as crowding out qualified male candidates or creating a pool of “golden skirted” women who serve on multiple boards. The target approach practiced by the ITU may be a sound alternative. This approach increases the participation of

women but still allows the participation of qualified men. If an ITU board wishes to appoint a man it can do so, if it pays the tariff fee of one additional woman on the board. While women may not wish to be seen as an opportunity cost, this solution does achieve the goal of increasing the participation of women. These women can begin to build an experience base of board participation, serve as mentors to other women if they so wish, and help change a culture. This is even more compelling in sports than in other sectors, given the secrecy with which leadership selection is carried out. Firms are accountable to their stockholders. The recent shakeup in FIFA leadership shows that public suasion is not enough to change this type of leadership.

## REFERENCES

- Agenor, Pierre-Richard, and Otaviano Canuto. 2012. *Measuring the Effect of Gender-Based Policies on Economic Growth*. Economic Premise 85. Washington: World Bank.
- Duflo, Esther. 2011. *Women's Empowerment and Economic Development*. NBER Working Paper 17702. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- EU (European Union). 2014. *Gender Equality in Sport: Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014–2020*. Brussels: European Commission.
- EY. 2014. *Making the connection: women, sport and leadership*. London.
- Henry, Ian P., and Leigh Robinson. 2010. Gender Equality and Leadership in the Olympic Bodies: Women, Leadership, and the Olympic Movement (June). Geneva: International Labor Organization.
- Humphreys, Brad R., and Jane E. Ruseski. 2008. *The Size and Scope of the Sports Industry in the United States*. IASE Conference Papers 0833. Limoges, France: International Association of Sports Economists.
- ILO (International Labor Organization). 2015. *Women in Business and Management Gaining Momentum*. Geneva.
- IOC (International Olympic Committee). 2014. Factsheet: Women in the Olympic Movement (May). Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Kotschwar, Barbara. 2014. *Women, Sports, and Development: Does It Pay to Let Girls Play?* Policy Brief 14-8 (March). Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Noland, Marcus, Barbara Kotschwar, and Tyler Moran. 2016 (forthcoming). *Balancing the Board: A Global Survey of Women in Corporate Leadership*. Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Noland, Marcus, and Kevin Stahler. 2014. *What Goes into a Medal: Women's Inclusion and Success at the Olympic Games*. Working Paper 14-7 (October). Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics.
- Stevenson, Betsey. 2007. Title IX and the Evolution of High School Sports. *Contemporary Economic Policy* 25, no. 4: 486–505.
- . 2010. *Beyond the Classroom: Using Title IX to Measure the Return to High School Sports*. NBER Working Paper 15728. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Teezel, Sarah. 2013. Rules and reform: eligibility, gender differences and the Olympic Games. In *Olympic Reform Ten Years Later*, eds. Heather Dichter and Bruce Kidd. New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Weed, Mike. 2009. The Potential of the Demonstration Effect to Grow and Sustain Participation in Sport. Centre for Sport, Physical Education and Activity Research (SPEAR). Canterbury, UK: Canterbury Christ Church University.

*This publication has been subjected to a prepublication peer review intended to ensure analytical quality. The views expressed are those of the authors. This publication is part of the overall program of the Peterson Institute for International Economics, as endorsed by its Board of Directors, but it does not necessarily reflect the views of individual members of the Board or of the Institute's staff or management.*

*The Peterson Institute for International Economics is a private nonpartisan, nonprofit institution for rigorous, intellectually open, and in-depth study and discussion of international economic policy. Its purpose is to identify and analyze important issues to make globalization beneficial and sustainable for the people of the United States and the world, and then to develop and communicate practical new approaches for dealing with them. Its work is funded by a highly diverse group of philanthropic foundations, private corporations, and interested individuals, as well as income on its capital fund. About 35 percent of the Institute's resources in its latest fiscal year were provided by contributors from outside the United States. A list of all financial supporters for the preceding four years is posted at <http://piie.com/supporters.cfm>.*

**Annex 1 Gender balance in international federations**

Sport organization		Gender of board chair	Gender of CEO	Female directors	Size of board	Percent female directors	Signed Brighton Declaration
INF	International Netball Federation	Female	Female	9	9	100.0	Yes
ITU	International Triathlon Union	Female	Female	6	15	40.0	Yes
IDBF	International Dragon Boat Federation	Female	Male	2	15	13.3	
FEI	International Equestrian Federation	Female	Male	2	6	33.3	Yes
FISav	International Federation of Savate	Female	Male	4	20	20.0	Yes
IFSS	International Federation of Sleddog Sports	Female	Male	4	12	33.3	
WCF	World Curling Federation	Female	Male	1	4	25.0	
CMAS	World Underwater Federation	Female	Male	3	21	14.3	
FIE	Fencing – Federation Internationale d’Escrime	Male	Female	5	17	29.4	
FIQ	Bowling – Federation Internationale des Quilleurs	Male	Female	0	7	0.0	
FIS	Federation Internationale de Ski	Male	Female	1	18	5.6	
IBU	International Biathlon Union	Male	Female	1	9	11.1	
FIBT	International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation	Male	Female	0	8	0.0	
IFSC	International Federation of Sport Climbing	Male	Female	1	10	10.0	
IGF	International Go Federation	Male	Female	0	12	0.0	
IHF	International Handball Federation	Male	Female	0	5	0.0	
FIH	International Hockey Federation	Male	Female	6	15	40.0	Yes
IJF	International Judo Federation	Male	Female	0	14	0.0	
UIPM	International Modern Pentathlon Union	Male	Female	2	21	9.5	
UIAA	International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation	Male	Female	1	5	20.0	
IOF	International Orienteering Federation	Male	Female	3	11	27.3	
IWWF	International Waterski and Wakeboard Federation	Male	Female	1	8	12.5	
JJIF	Ju-Jitsu International Federation	Male	Female	0	5	0.0	
WBSC	World Baseball Softball Confederation	Male	Female	3	11	27.3	
WDSF	World DanceSport Federation	Male	Female	3	16	18.8	
BWF	Badminton World Federation	Male	Male	2	14	14.3	Yes
CIPS	Sport Fishing – Confederation Internationale De La Peche Sportive	Male	Male	8	8	0.0	
FIPV	Federacion Internacional de Pelota Vasca	Male	Male	0	20	0.0	
FIBA	Federation Internationale de Basketball	Male	Male	5	23	21.7	
FIFA	Federation Internationale de Football Association	Male	Male	1	25	4.0	
CMSB	Federation Mondiale des Sports de Boules	Male	Male	1	11	9.1	
ISAF	International Sailing Federation	Male	Male	2	8	25.0	Yes
IAF	International Aikido Federation	Male	Male	0	9	0.0	
FIAS	International Amateur Sambo Federation	Male	Male	0	14	0.0	
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations	Male	Male	6	27	22.2	
IBAF	International Baseball Federation	Male	Male	0	14	0.0	
ICF	International Canoe Federation	Male	Male	3	30	10.0	
ICSF	International Casting Sport Federation	Male	Male	0	9	0.0	
FIDE	International Chess Federation	Male	Male	2	20	10.0	
ICC	International Cricket Council	Male	Male	0	16	0.0	
IFAF	International Federation of American Football	Male	Male	1	10	10.0	Yes

*(table continues)*

**Annex 1 Gender balance in international federations (continued)**

	<b>Sport organization</b>	<b>Gender of board chair</b>	<b>Gender of CEO</b>	<b>Female directors</b>	<b>Size of board</b>	<b>Percent female directors</b>	<b>Signed Brighton Declaration</b>
IFBB	International Federation of Body Building and Fitness	Male	Male	2	15	13.3	
IFMA	International Federation of Muaythai Amateur	Male	Male	7	34	20.6	
IFA	International Fistball Association	Male	Male	0	8	0.0	
IFF	International Floorball Federation	Male	Male	3	11	27.3	Yes
IGF	International Golf Federation	Male	Male	1	14	7.1	
FIG	International Gymnastics Federation	Male	Male	7	23	30.4	Yes
IIHF	International Ice Hockey Federation	Male	Male	2	14	14.3	Yes
FIK	International Kendo Federation	Male	Male	0	14	0.0	
ILS	International Life Saving Federation	Male	Male	3	21	14.3	Yes
FIL	International Luge Federation	Male	Male	2	15	13.3	
FIM	International Motorcycling Federation	Male	Male	1	13	7.7	Yes
IPF	International Powerlifting Federation	Male	Male	1	11	9.1	
FIRS	International Roller Sports Federation	Male	Male	3	12	25.0	
FISA	International Rowing Federation	Male	Male	2	7	28.6	
IRB	International Rugby Board	Male	Male	0	27	0.0	
ISTAF	International Sepaktakraw Federation	Male	Male	0	5	0.0	
ISSF	International Shooting Sport Federation	Male	Male	0	13	0.0	
ISU	International Skating Union	Male	Male	5	11	45.5	
ISMF	International Ski Mountaineering Federation	Male	Male	1	4	25.0	
ISTF	International Soft Tennis Federation	Male	Male	0	5	0.0	
IFS	International Sumo Federation	Male	Male	0	8	0.0	
ISA	International Surfing Association	Male	Male	2	6	33.3	
ITF	International Tennis Federation	Male	Male	0	14	0.0	
FIVB	International Volleyball Federation	Male	Male	2	16	12.5	
IWF	International Weightlifting Federation	Male	Male	1	21	4.8	Yes
PI	Panathlon International	Male	Male	0	0	0.0	
FINA	Swimming – Federation Internationale de Natation	Male	Male	1	24	4.2	
FAI	International Air Sports Federation	Male	Male	0	7	0.0	Yes
ICU	International Cheer Union	Male	Male	2	13	15.4	
TWIF	Tug of War International Federation	Male	Male	1	5	20.0	
UWW	United World Wrestling	Male	Male	4	21	19.1	
WAF	World Archery Federation	Male	Male	3	13	23.1	
WBF	World Bridge Federation	Male	Male	2	22	9.1	
WCBS	World Confederation of Billiard Sports	Male	Male	0	8	0.0	
WDF	World Darts Federation	Male	Male	2	8	25.0	
WDFD	World Flying Disc Federation	Male	Male	2	12	16.7	
WKF	World Karate Federation	Male	Male	1	13	7.7	
WMF	World Minigolf Sport Federation	Male	Male	0	8	0.0	
WSF	World Squash Federation	Male	Male	1	5	20.0	Yes
WTF	World Taekwondo Federation	Male	Male	2	28	7.1	
FMJD	World Draughts Federation	Male	Male	1	14	7.1	

*(table continues)*

**Annex 1 Gender balance in international federations** *(continued)*

<b>Sport organization</b>		<b>Gender of board chair</b>	<b>Gender of CEO</b>	<b>Female directors</b>	<b>Size of board</b>	<b>Percent female directors</b>	<b>Signed Brighton Declaration</b>
FIL	Federation of International Lacrosse	Male	n.a.	2	6	33.3	
FIA	Federation Internationale de l'Automobile	Male	n.a.	0	4	0.0	
FIP	Federation of International Polo	Male	n.a.	0	18	0.0	
AIBA	International Boxing Association	Male	n.a.	0	25	0.0	Yes
UCI	International Cycling Union	Male	n.a.	1	4	25.0	
IFI	International Federation Icestock Sport	Male	n.a.	0	5	0.0	
IRF	International Racquetball Federation	Male	n.a.	2	12	16.7	
WAKO	World Association of Kickboxing Organizations	Male	n.a.	1	17	5.9	

n.a. = not available

Sources: Data gathered from international federation websites and Sydney Scoreboard (available at <http://www.sydney scoreboard.com/>).

**Annex 2 Gender balance in national sports organizations**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of national sport organizations</b>	<b>Number of women board directors</b>	<b>Total number of board directors</b>	<b>Percentage of women board directors</b>
Oceania	Cook Islands	24	80	187	43
Europe	Norway	51	173	463	37
Latin America and Caribbean	Costa Rica	30	66	224	29
Europe	Wales	53	126	432	29
North America	United States	39	165	574	29
Oceania	Australia	52	105	366	29
East Asia and Pacific	American Samoa	14	25	89	28
North America	Canada	50	138	495	28
Oceania	Marshall Islands	10	17	62	27
Sub-Saharan Africa	Botswana	35	63	250	25
Europe	Iceland	28	41	163	25
Latin America and Caribbean	Colombia	11	14	57	25
Europe	Northern Ireland	33	77	327	24
Sub-Saharan Africa	Zambia	32	67	285	24
Europe	Scotland	57	105	453	23
Europe	Finland	65	127	551	23
Europe	Ireland	59	133	579	23
Europe	England	56	128	574	22
Sub-Saharan Africa	Tanzania	14	36	165	22
Latin America and Caribbean	Venezuela	25	48	225	21
Europe	France	82	149	724	21
Middle East and North Africa	Tunisia	24	47	231	20
Europe	Denmark	58	89	455	20
Europe	Netherlands	75	80	475	17
Europe	Germany	60	87	524	17
Europe	Malta	44	53	322	16
Latin America and Caribbean	Haiti	14	20	132	15
Europe	Spain	38	88	590	15
Europe	Cyprus	21	39	286	14
Europe	Estonia	63	54	407	13
Latin America and Caribbean	Brazil	23	26	202	13
Europe	Croatia	69	66	543	12
Europe	Greece	26	41	354	12
Europe	Czech Republic	80	72	632	11
Middle East and North Africa	Iran	28	28	254	11
Europe	Italy	61	98	925	11
Europe	Poland	37	37	398	9
East Asia and Pacific	Japan	60	112	1,339	8
South Asia	Bangladesh	40	55	1,029	5

Source: Sydney Scoreboard, available at: <http://www.sydney scoreboard.com/>.