



Improving the Media Coverage of our Sportswomen

#justwatchus

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to examine the visibility, or otherwise, of female athletes¹ in the media; set out the case for change; and recommend strategies to improve the visibility of sportswomen in traditional and digital media. Ten percent of the overall sports media coverage is not good enough. We recommend three actions to increase this - empower, collaborate and champion.

And let's empower ***sportswomen to take ownership of their own media***; and for others to ***tell and champion the stories being told***.

Let's collaborate with key allies in line with the soon to be released Value and Visibility pillar of the strategic framework for Women and Girls in sport and recreation. We recommend that Sport NZ challenge the poor visibility and work alongside NSOs and RSTs to improve this - through awareness, education and development of a gender quality policy which includes the visibility of women in sport.

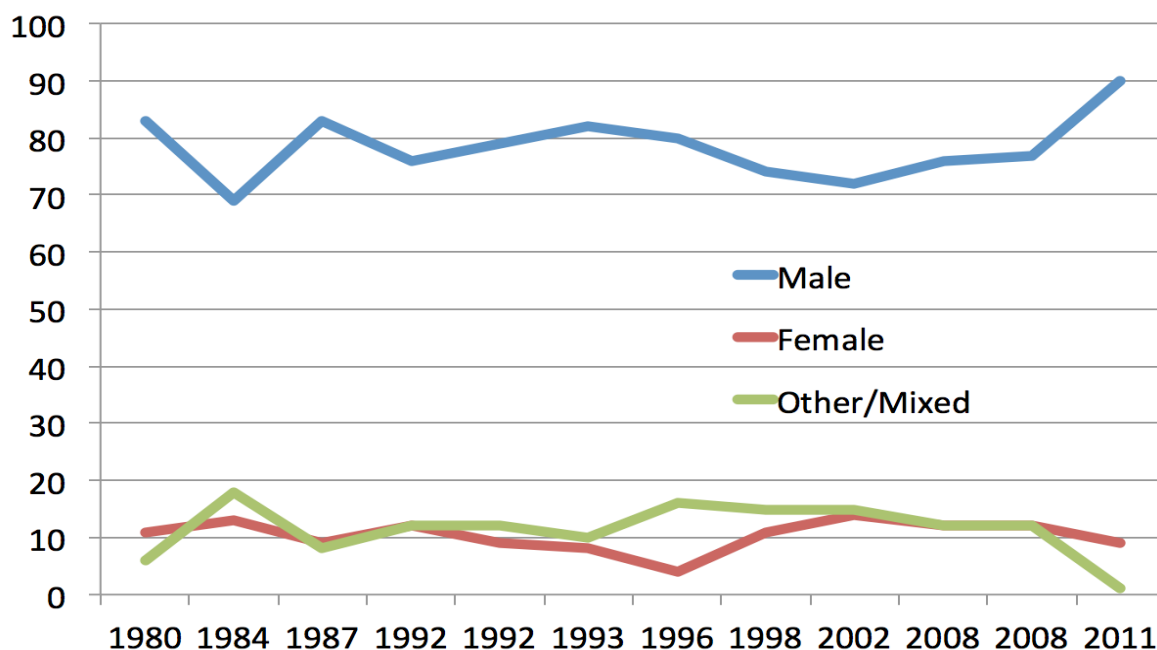
And let's champion the change so that female athletes receive equitable representation in the media. We will do this via a powerful 50 second trailer video we will launch during our presentation in September that is designed to promote our female athletes as worthy of our attention.

¹ Note that our brief was to explore the visibility of ***sportswomen*** in the media. We appreciate that there is a wider issue regarding the participation of women in physical and recreation activities, and that the term "sport" can be considered exclusive of these women, however examining this issue was outside the scope of our brief. Hence, references to "sport" in this report are intended to refer to competitive sports / sportswomen.

What is the problem?

For too long, women have played a secondary role in most aspects of professional life, be that in politics, corporations, boardrooms, and in the sports section of our newspapers. We are encouraged by the heightened discussion of diversity and inclusion across gender, race and sexual orientation; political campaigns for equal pay; and drives to improve the gender balance on corporate Boards and in C-suite roles. It is also worth noting that recent research suggests that women currently control \$20 trillion or 27% of the world’s wealth; female consumer purchasing power exceeds the GDP of India and China combined (Forbes 2013); women are fast becoming “prominent creators of wealth” and it is expected women will control 75% of all household spending by 2028². However, despite the progress and increasing commercial power of women, much work is left to be done.

In New Zealand since the 1980s, female athletes on average make up 10% of the overall sports media coverage (while men averaged 83% of coverage). The graph below, based on data gathered between 1979 and 2011, illustrates the enormous gap between the coverage of men and women sportspeople³.



² <http://www.genanalytics.co.uk/knowledge/women-consumer-power/> February 13, 2017 by Jane Gotts

³ Bruce, 2013, New Zealand. In T Horky & J-U Nieland (Eds.), International Sports Press Survey 2011, Sport & Communication (Vol 5) (pp 245-254). Norderstedt, Germany

Media coverage of female athletes does increase during major events. In 2016 an analysis of New Zealand online news coverage showed 28.2% was dedicated to sportswomen. However, dig deeper and within those percentages, according to a study presented by NZOC in 2015, more total broadcast time is focused on men, men feature in more main 'news' bulletin content, and men led the sports news more often. Another NZOC case study found that throughout 2016, the All Blacks were mentioned 81,642 times in the New Zealand media; the Silver Ferns, by far the best covered women's sports team, received 8,620 mentions⁴. Also of note however, is that during the 2018 Commonwealth Games, female athletes commanded 60% of media coverage⁵ – a positive sign that change is beginning to occur. Now is not the time to rest on those laurels.

Internationally, the statistics are as bad. Women's sport made up 7% of all sports media coverage in the UK in 2014.⁶ This percentage was derived from 10% television sports coverage, 2% national newspaper sports coverage, 5% radio sports coverage and 4% of online sports coverage all dedicated to women's sport. Similarly, a UNESCO report in 2018 concluded that "only four per cent of global sports media content is devoted to women's sports, and only 12 per cent of sports news is presented by women worldwide."⁷

More recently in NZ, Stuff reported on the Dot Loves Data study which quantified the gender disparity of Olympic and Commonwealth Games athletes reporting in mainstream media. Analysis of almost 42,000 written articles since 1902 revealed that any male athlete received more coverage (4.4 mentions) than a female gold medallist athlete (3.7 mentions), while male gold medallists received more than double that of their female counterparts (8.8 mentions).⁸ These statistics prompted Stuff's Editorial Director Mark Stevens to admit that the findings were disappointing and that sports newsrooms have a responsibility to do better and close the gap, saying "our readers and viewers are extraordinarily diverse and it's vital to me that our content properly reflects that." This realisation, publicly expressed by a senior mainstream media decision maker, illustrates that the issue and importance of gender balanced sports reporting is beginning to gain awareness and traction.

⁴ iSentia Case Study, NZOC Rio 2016 <https://www.isentia.com/case-studies/nzoc-rio-2016>

⁵ NZOC 2018 Commonwealth Games Media Coverage Report 9 November 2017 – 21 April 2018 (iSentia)

⁶ Women in Sports' (UK) 2014 report "Say Yes to Success"

⁷ UNESCO report, 2018

⁸ Stuff, Dana Johannsen, 27 April 2018 <https://www.stuff.co.nz/sport/other-sports/103413304/new-study-reveals-stark-gender-bias-in-sports-coverage>

So why is this a problem?

Media coverage of sports women is important because media is a powerful influencer of public opinion and values, it shapes and reinforces gender norms, and represents the dominant image or symbolic representations of society. The media has the ability to challenge these norms ...[by] promoting a fair portrayal of sportspeople irrespective of gender.”⁹ If gender norms are misrepresented, it can lead to women being perceived as less or inferior. Similarly, when sportswomen receive significantly less coverage than their male counterparts, the perception is that sportswomen (and their achievements) are less valued.

Visibility of sportswomen is not just about creating awareness of their sporting performances. The 2017 Sport NZ Value of Sport report¹⁰ tells us that being physically active creates happier, healthier people, better connected communities and a stronger New Zealand. Sport can be powerful in changing lives. We know that sport participation grows healthy and confident young girls¹¹. We know girls who play sport have greater social and economic mobility, are less likely to use drugs and perform better at school.¹² We know that girls who play sports have more positive body image, lower levels of depression and higher states of psychological well-being.¹³ Further to these positive outcomes, 74% of executive women state that a background in sport can help accelerate a women's professional career¹⁴.

Sport NZ research in 2011 indicated that young New Zealanders are influenced by high performance athletes and teams when choosing how they participate in sport and active recreation¹⁵. 34.5% of boys and 21.5% of girls (10 to 15 years) identified that famous sport personalities influenced them when they choose what sport or active things they do. 25.2% of boys and 14.0% of girls (10 to 15 years) identified ‘a famous sports team’ influences them

⁹<https://www.olympic.org/news/the-ioc-un-women-unesco-p-g-and-nbc-sports-are-changing-the-conversation-about-women-in-sport>

¹⁰ Sport NZ The Value of Sport Main Report 2017: 92% of New Zealanders believe being active keeps them physically fit and healthy and helps relieve stress; 88% believe that sport and other physical activities provide them with opportunities to achieve and help build confidence; 84% believe sport and physical activity bring people together and create a sense of belonging; and 74% say sport and physical activity help build vibrant and stimulating communities.

¹¹ Ernst Young & ESPN 2015 - [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-where-will-you-find-your-next-leader/\\$FILE/where-will-you-find-your-next-leader-report-from-EY-and-espnw.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-where-will-you-find-your-next-leader/$FILE/where-will-you-find-your-next-leader-report-from-EY-and-espnw.pdf)

¹² ibid

¹³ Hillyer & Huffman 2017

¹⁴ Ernst Young & ESPN 2015 - [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-where-will-you-find-your-next-leader/\\$FILE/where-will-you-find-your-next-leader-report-from-EY-and-espnw.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-where-will-you-find-your-next-leader/$FILE/where-will-you-find-your-next-leader-report-from-EY-and-espnw.pdf)

¹⁵ [Sport NZ's Young People Survey, 2011, In depth report, Section 7.5, p103](#)

when they choose what sport or active things they do¹⁶. Is this disparity between boys and girls because sportswomen are less visible?

Traditional mainstream media is increasingly being criticised for the minimal coverage of female athletes. The quality of reporting can be an issue as well, as media coverage of sportswomen can and often does play to unflattering “female athlete” stereotypes, depict sportswomen in highly sexualised imagery, report on them the context of their personal lives or with reference to their male partner and / or lack a performance focus.

Consequently, a lack of quality media coverage makes it difficult for female athletes to attract commercial opportunities. Driving the visibility of women’s sports performance across all media channels generates the potential for increased sponsorship opportunities, enables greater focus on training, and potentially leads to improved performance. And we all know the media love to focus on winners, as evidenced by the recent surge in support and coverage of our National women’s rugby teams.

Women’s sporting events remain marginalised from the major mainstream multi-million-dollar sports media industry.¹⁷ Unfortunately there is little evidence to suggest that this has changed in the decade since the 2007 United Nations report was issued. As reflected by Dr Toni Bruce and Marie Hardin¹⁸, it seems the message from the media to women is “Go ahead and play, but don’t expect us to pay any attention!” So why is there such a large gap in the level of media coverage?

Existing research¹⁹ identifies sports journalism as a male world that consistently produces content with a disproportionate focus on elite, able-bodied, professional, male athletes. It is predominantly males who produce the content, feature in photographs and are the focus of articles. There is a place for (some) sportswomen, but it is profoundly marginalised. In short, in both the New Zealand data and the International Sports Press Survey (ISPS) summary of coverage in 21 other countries, stories about women’s sport represent little more than “passing showers over an ocean of media coverage of men.”²⁰ This has also been referred to as primarily “of men, by men and for men²¹.”

¹⁶ We were not able to locate any more recent research on the influencers of young people in terms of the sport or active recreation they participate in. It would be interesting to understand whether there have been any changes to these statistics in recent years.

¹⁷ United Nations Women’s Watch Report - December, 2007 p25.

¹⁸ Bruce and Hardin, *Reclaiming their Voices*, 2014

¹⁹ Bruce, 2013; Gee, 2009; Knoppers & Elling, 2004; Schoch & Ohl, 2011

²⁰ Bruce, 2013, New Zealand. In T Horky & J-U Nieland (Eds.), *International Sports Press Survey 2011*, Sport & Communication (Vol 5) (pp 245-254). Norderstedt, Germany.

²¹ Bruce, 2018.

Three focus areas for change

The research clearly identifies a long standing and ongoing disparity in the amount of media coverage allocated to sportswomen, in New Zealand and internationally. To understand how to shift the current situation in a sustainable way, we need to understand the issues that lead to this gender biased reporting. Who makes the decisions about what we see in the media? Who has the power and the influence? What levers are available to pull?

Our research revealed two key issues that lead to gender biased reporting. Firstly, mainstream sports media publications do not pay enough attention or dedication to reporting on women in sport and editorial decisions appear to be made on the assumption that the public cares less about female sports and athletes than their male counterparts. Secondly, the sports newsroom does not reflect a gender-balanced society, is predominantly populated by male writers. From these findings, we have identified three areas to focus on for change.

1. Champion sportswomen through awareness, understanding and education

To create impetus for change, there needs to be greater public awareness of the disparity, greater recognition of achievements, and greater value placed on women and girls' participation in sport. Here, we suggest that we do this through social media.

Social media makes it easy and cost effective for anyone to promote and share stories. A recently launched initiative through Sport Waikato illustrates this point. "This is ME"²² is a movement via a website and hashtag, that aims to encourage, support and celebrate girls and women of all ages getting out there and active - whatever way they choose to. It encourages girls and women to be connected - to opportunities to get moving locally, to positive messages about getting and staying active, and to other girls and women just like them.

Social media provides enormous scope for sportswomen to establish their own personal brand, create and publish their own content. Sportswomen can effectively promote themselves, educate their followers, leverage their posts with existing sponsors and generate potential influencer income. Some New Zealand sportswomen have their own websites (for example, Lisa Carrington²³) which act as blogs to inform their followers and the public about results, special announcements and other information. Athlete generated

²² <https://thisisme.org.nz/>

²³ <https://lisacarrington.co.nz>

social media content can (and often is) picked up by mainstream sports and general media. General media outlets have dedicated algorithms searching daily for public personalities' social media activity. A recent example of this was when Silver Ferns captain Katrina Grant's Instagram engagement announcement found itself on the NZ Herald and Stuff websites.

Social media can create both positive and negative impressions, so it is important that sportswomen are aware of the pitfalls. HPSNZ runs some workshops on this through its Athlete Life Team, though attendance at these workshops is voluntary and access is limited to carded athletes. We propose that (as a minimum) **all** HPSNZ carded athletes are provided with guidance on how to effectively build an online brand profile and present themselves in a genuine way through their own social media channels. This could be done through presentations at performance camps, resources contained on a Facebook group page, video or webinar.

Increasing the visibility and creating champions for women in sport requires more voices (male and female) to speak up and challenge the status quo in situations where an unconscious bias may be operating. Fostering a culture within sports organisations and media institutions which welcomes open talk and vigorous debate on gender issues is an important first step.

2. Collaborate with National Sporting Organisations (NSOs)

New Zealand has over 70 NSOs representing sports participants at all levels which receive investment from Sport New Zealand (Sport NZ). Fifty-seven NSOs across both summer and winter sports are affiliates or associate members of the NZOC. The majority are also affiliated with their respective International Federations (IFs). NSOs also have extensive relationships with athletes and coaches, sponsors and media outlets themselves. Through these relationships, NSOs have a pivotal role to play in the effort to increase the visibility of women in sport in both mainstream and social or other emerging media technologies. NSOs continue to value the contribution of mainstream media, however they are **uniquely positioned to generate their own media content**, promote their sports and athletes via live streaming, and therefore increase the visibility of women across social and digital media platforms. Their historic dependence on mainstream media to generate publicity has reduced with the advent of social and digital media channels which have provided new opportunities for NSOs to create and control their own media content (and share/distribute content generated by athletes and other interested individuals).

Most of the large NSOs have their own websites and staff who are responsible for creating the content which appears on their digital channels. NSOs can strategically frame the narrative of each story featured on their channels to match the goals of their organisation (which of course should include increasing the profile of their female athletes and support staff).

We recommend that NSOs be proactive to ensure the online content of their male and female athletes is given equal prominence and ease of accessibility. For example, on the NZ Rugby website²⁴, two clicks will get a fan to the All Blacks' fan page. By contrast, a fan looking for the Black Ferns' page must dig six clicks deep. The Smallblacks and Teens are given greater prominence on the NZ Rugby website than the Black Ferns' page. It would be simple to add the Black Ferns to the Fan menu, thus immediately increasing its prominence and making a clear statement about the relative value that NZ Rugby places on the Black Ferns as compared to the All Blacks.

Hockey New Zealand is a great example of a NSO that has gender balanced coverage of its players. The home page of the website²⁵ heavily features women players. Fans need click only once on the Vantage Black Sticks tab to be taken to a list of links to information about the men's and women's teams. The Hockey NZ website's home page makes it completely clear that both male and female programmes are offered and valued. The international calendar features both schedules side by side. Imagery on the website is attractive, well gender balanced and depicts women in positive roles.

Done well, NSO websites can become a meeting point for fans offering opportunities to communicate with each other about issues such as the merits of different teams and players²⁶. Photos and video footage can be made available (and at low cost especially if sharing athlete generated content). This leads to greater engagement between fans and athletes, increased interest and provides another opportunity for NSOs to attract sponsors or advertisers and generate revenue.

New communication technologies have improved the ability of athletes and groups to distribute their content and to redistribute content produced by others.²⁷

²⁴ www.rugby.co.nz

²⁵ hockeynz.co.nz

²⁶ Rowe D (2004) *Sport, culture and the media: the unruly trinity*, 2nd edn. Open University Press, Maidenhead

²⁷ ICRI et. al. (2009a) *Independent study on indicators for media pluralism in the member states— towards a risk-based approach. Final report annex I: user guide*. Accessed 18 Aug 2010.

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media_taskforce/doc/pluralism/study/user_guide_09.pdf.

NSOs have the opportunity to collaborate with athletes and/or fans to share and disseminate user generated content on NSO social and digital media platforms. The advantage of this is that the content will likely be on trend and reflect the current views and interests of the public. However, an NSO would need to carefully manage the associated risks (e.g. breaches of third party intellectual or commercial and broadcast rights, especially during major events) to maximise the benefits.

Compounding the influence of NSOs is that they **control the national event schedule** within their code, and accordingly, which events are scheduled and prioritised. This is important, as sporting events help New Zealand to identify and work through social issues, such as racial, gender and other prejudices²⁸. As event controllers, NSOs can ensure that their annual event calendar and any one-off events (such as World or regional championships) that they may host provide equal opportunities for participation by, and media coverage of, its female membership. However, the reality is that NSOs operate in an environment where resources are limited and since typically, women's events are seen to generate less public interest, they are considered lower priority.

NSOs are able to control this decision-making process and make the call that women's events should be prioritised and find the resources to make those events happen. NSOs can approach sponsors for targeted funding of women's events - for example, the Mitre 10 sponsorship of women's rugby's Farrah Palmer Cup. And in doing so, NSOs influence the views of the sponsor and their network on the relative value of women's sports. If the NSO doesn't value women's events, then sponsors will not either. Two good examples are: Softball NZ which recently hosted the women's softball world champs and NZ Rugby's recent double header tests where both the All Blacks and Black Ferns played their Australian counterparts in Sydney and Auckland.

Nancy Lee, Canadian broadcaster at the recent IWF Conference in Botswana stated there is an opportunity for NSOs to take more control of potential media involvement in how they schedule competition. We support Lee's recommendation for NSOs to stage men's and women's finals in the same stadium where possible. The coverage of the recent Rugby Seven's World Cup is an example of how this can be successfully navigated where the women have become major contributors to that tournament success.

Funding is a constant challenge for many NSOs. While many NSOs have access to Sport NZ funding, much of this is tagged and cannot be spent on media coverage. Where NSOs have access to untagged funding there is a strong argument that some of that funding should be allocated to media coverage. For example – photography agencies will send staff to cover

²⁸ Sports NZ publication "Better Outcomes from New Zealand Sporting Events".

sports events that are either on the global sporting calendar which are considered as having high levels of public interest, or those which NSOs pay them to attend.

Some NSOs are in the fortunate position of being able to sell broadcast rights to live events to mainstream broadcasters, who in turn rely on access to live events to attract viewers. These NSOs can leverage the sale of broadcast rights to ensure that broadcasters are obliged to include an increased proportion of female content as part of the rights deal. Direct relationships with sports journalists and broadcasters represent an opportunity to advocate for and influence media content by proactively promoting the achievements of women within their respective sports.

3. Collaborate with Other Allies

Increasing the visibility of sportswomen in the media requires systematic change and a fundamental shift in thinking across the sports / sports media industry. No one group will be able to effect the change we believe is necessary. It will require a team effort. To that end (and also to ensure that we leverage from, but do not duplicate, activity already underway in this space) we need to identify and foster relationships with the men and women in positions of the influence who can champion the visibility of sportswomen in the media and provide sportswomen with opportunities for increased visibility.

We identified numerous potential allies, their roles and why they could influence change. There were too many to include in this report, so we have homed in on those whom we believe are the strongest influencers of change in New Zealand. These are the Honourable Grant Robertson (the Minister for Sport), Sport NZ (the crown entity for Sport and Recreation in NZ), the New Zealand Olympic Committee, Women in Sport Aotearoa (WISPA), the Wonderful Group (W-Group), and the media training schools.

We are in a privileged position that the Minister of Sport wants to see New Zealand's elite female athletes valued more highly, not just what they are paid or their commercialisation but how they are valued and promoted. The Minister has made a commitment to make women within sport the "No.1 priority" in his sport portfolio. This includes doing more to support girls and women to participate, achieving pay equity for female athletes, and elevating more women into leadership roles.

If the sports system supports gender equity, then more could be done to drive equitable opportunities for men and women from grass roots to high performance to leadership.

Sport NZ is just one player in the sports system but as the crown entity for sport and recreation, it is in a position to influence and lead on gender equity. In response to the Minister of Sport's performance expectations, Sport NZ is currently developing a National Framework for Women and Girls in Sport. Sport NZ will determine its role and specific responses to the outcomes the framework is seeking to achieve. This framework will be broad enough to include all organisations and individuals identified and guide roles to ensure the significant effort is channelled to maximum effect and to avoid duplication. One of the three areas in the framework is Value and Visibility of Women and Girls in Sport and we expect our recommendations from this report will feed in here.

The New Zealand Olympic Committee is a powerful ally in the effort to improve the quantity and quality of female sports media coverage. The NZOC controls the delivery of NZ's pinnacle sports events (Olympics and Commonwealth Games) which attract a tremendous amount of media attention. NZOC invests heavily in the creation of online content which it publishes via its digital channels and fosters positive relationships with traditional media outlets.

The Women in Sport Aotearoa (WISPA) vision is that women and girls are valued, visible and influential in sport. WISPA exists to transform sport for the betterment of women and girls, and through sport participation, grow future leaders and role models. WISPA recognises the need to give a national voice to promote positive change for women and girls in sport.

New Zealand has won the bid to host the International Working Group (IWG) on Women in Sport from September 2018 for four years culminating with the 8th International conference in July 2022. This is significant for New Zealand and is a platform from which we should be leveraging. The vision is a sustainable sporting culture that enables and values the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport - so this must be part of the co-ordinated approach to the change we want to see. The action plan for specific goals and action steps aimed at offering men and women equal opportunities in the sport arena should include visibility of women in sport. The New Zealand IWG Conference and secretariat will be led by WISPA.

The Secretariat supports the monitoring of developments worldwide in women and sport along with information on best practices and produces a quadrennial Progress Report on Women and Sport influencing globally and leaving a legacy for New Zealand. The bid to host the IWG was a joint effort by Sport NZ, Women in Sport Aotearoa (WISPA), the NZ Olympic Committee and Auckland Tourism, Events & Economic Development (ATEED) so all these agencies are part of the influencers of change.

The online stories in LockerRoom are an example of a recent initiative to raise the visibility of women in sport. LockerRoom is an opportunity to give women in sport a powerful voice through online features, profiles, issues and news. Its journalists can tell the incredible stories of our females participating in sport (not only elite athletes) and in sharing those stories, can influence other young women to take up, or continue with sport, and create role models. We encourage anyone, especially NSO and female athletes, to send story ideas through to Suzanne McFadden who runs LockerRoom.

On the face of it, it would seem a good idea to use conscious bias to grow and recruit the number of female sports journalists. However, there is not much evidence to support this making a significant difference. And when more women come into sports media, the culture of sports media doesn't change much so many head right on 'out' again because they find the culture sexist. So, it is not just about more female sports journalists, but also simultaneously about changing the culture that sees women (as athletes, administrators and journalists) as bringing a valuable and more diverse perspective.

The training provided through Whitireia New Zealand (Journalism and Radio Broadcasting), New Zealand Broadcasting School Ara Institute of Canterbury and the NZ Radio Training School in Auckland and Wellington do not provide any specific training in sports journalism. We should be influencing this training to ensure journalists are aware of the disparity and the negative impact of the current reporting, and ways in which this can be done better.

We also need to build stronger relationships with editors and producers of our national and local media organisations to ensure they are aware of the negative impact of the current reporting and how to improve its quality. In this space we have the Wonderful Group (W-Group) of people who empower women in sports media. They are the only network in New Zealand of women who have broken ground in the wider sports media industry. They want more women in leadership positions; and want to bring more women into the media industry with a specific emphasis on scholarships, networks and mentorships for young sport-loving women from financially challenged and diverse backgrounds. The W Group

also offers its 'It Takes Two' mentoring programme to help young women with ambitions to work in sport media matching them with experienced men and women in the industry to provide support and guidance.

We can also build stronger relationships with our photographers. A great initiative by Getty images and the Women's Sports Trust in the UK²⁹ aimed to increase the visibility of female athletes and women's sports, whilst also challenging the way in which female athletes are portrayed in imagery. They focused on the realistic and aspirational representation of sportswomen and girls with a powerful collection of the 'Best of Women's Sports' featuring the world's top sportswomen in action. The [images](#) were made available free of charge to schools, universities and not-for profit organisations to promote the powerful depiction of women and girls in sports to the broadest audience possible. Getty Images and the Women's Sports Trust also developed a set of guidelines³⁰ that they hoped would become the industry standard. We believe that WISPA will be well positioned through their Secretariat of the IWG to lead on such an initiative here in NZ.

²⁹ <https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/search/2/image?events=674714827&family=editorial&sort=best#license>

³⁰ Women's Sport Trust (UK) and Getty Images Partnership: <https://www.womenssporttrust.com/getty-images-partners-womens-sport-trust-redefine-imagery-female-athletes-commercial-editorial-storytelling/>

Sport appeal not sex appeal. Focus on the skill, strength, speed, passion and drama of the sport instead of how the athletes look.

Mix it up. Capture a diverse mix of athletes participating in a wide range of sports.

Keep it real. Authentic, credible imagery that represents the athlete as she'd want to be seen.

Play your part. Everyone involved in the production, reporting and consumption of sporting imagery to take responsibility for the changes they can make.

More is more. Increase the number of images taken and seen. Be bold. Be creative and push the boundaries. Seek out new talent and new audiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CHAMPION

Female athletes deserve fair representation in the media.

We partnered with Wellington agency EightyOne to produce an aspirational short video on our behalf that features prominent New Zealand sportswomen showcasing their athletic talent within their sporting environment. This has been designed as a teaser piece of content to a bigger campaign strategy dedicated to “Supporting Women’s Sport”, that we believe the time and sentiment is right for someone in New Zealand to pursue.

Wider elements of the campaign idea include:

- Creating a # along the lines of #justwatchus that promotes Supporting Women’s Sport
- Create a brand that identifies with this movement. One concept that has been developed by EightyOne is the use of the + symbol – simple, effective, and importantly positioned as a positive sentiment towards the support for our female athletes
- Finalising the hero video and release further content captured with the athletes that show comparison stats of then and now, again focusing on positive change while reinforcing there is more room for improvement
- Create a data tracking tool that can measure the quantity and quality of digital media reporting of women’s sport, and report with a monthly tracker available for our media partners



2. COLLABORATE

Band together to create better and louder music.

- Link key allies to collaborate on visibility projects in line with the Value and Visibility pillar of strategic framework for Women and Girls in sport and recreation currently being developed by Sport NZ.
- Utilise the networks and resources of existing likeminded individuals and organisations to promote the message and take action. For example, WISPA would be well positioned through its Secretariat of the IWG to lead an NZ initiative to curate imagery of powerful sports women, girls and the people who support them.

Establish a gender equality policy which includes the visibility of women in sport.

- The strategic framework for Girls and Women in Sport should include a statement around visibility in policy creation, including recommendations and determine responsibilities for producing such a resource.
- Sport NZ and HPSNZ work alongside the NSOs and RSTs to develop a gender equality policy, including the visibility of women in sports media.
- Sport NZ to revisit its 2011 research to identify what influences young people (in particular girls and young women) when they choose what sport or physical activity to do.

Establish targets for NSOs to take control of their own media.

- Challenge NSOs to make increasing the visibility of women in their sport a strategic goal and taking stock of the current visibility of female athletes on their websites, social media and press releases. Once the visibility measures have been established, set targets for improvement. Percentage increments should be agreed upon between Sport NZ or WISPA targeting an ultimate goal of gender equal coverage. We believe data analysis company Dot Loves Data are well positioned to provide analysis support to the Sport NZ Intelligence Team to measure visibility change.
- Sport NZ could incentivise NSOs with potential funding or other opportunities to create greater buy in and change.

Educate Sport Sector Communication Managers.

- Utilise the guidelines developed by Getty Images and the Women's Sport Trust, with input from the Wonderful Group or WISPA, to develop a one-page guideline for use by NSOs,

RSTs and organisation communication managers, which gives examples of appropriate images and language in text.

- Conduct a session at the annual NZOC General Assembly or Sport NZ conference focusing on the issues around the visibility of women in sport and how these can be addressed.

3. EMPOWER

Train sportswomen to take ownership of their own media.

- Presentations to reach as many female athletes as possible, to support them creating their own media and making the most of social media platforms in collaboration with the W-Group.
- We recommend that athletes are empowered to take ownership of creating their own authentic media which media outlets, such as LockerRoom, have the potential to pick up. This should be facilitated to ensure it does not serve as a distraction from their sporting performance or create narcissistic behaviours if the focus on self-promotion is taken to an extreme.

Tell stories and champion the stories being told.

- We recommend that our allies work with the sports media through the support of W-Group, the LockerRoom, the Spinoff and WISPA (soon to launch its own website) to tell the rich personal stories behind team and individuals' performances.
- Encourage and support budding sports journalists, through training and education, and provide them with the stories. Social media makes this possible. Through this we all can encourage sharing and facilitate the sharing of athlete generated stories. And no doubt in the future there will be new platforms and other ways in which to generate and share stories - so our stories need to stay relevant and not get lost.
- Educate mainstream media on what sports content women want to read and in what format. Call out poor reporting and encourage media outlets to regularly monitor and report on the data split.
- Hold an event which involves all media bosses to present the statistics and ask them for their views on a solution.