



WSLA

Inclusive Cultures

Challenging unconscious gender
bias in sport

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NZ Olympic Women's Sport Leadership Academy

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WSLA

NZ Olympic Women's Sport Leadership Academy

The New Zealand Olympic Women's Sport Leadership Academy is designed to support NZ's female Olympians make a positive transition from sport performance to sport leadership and connect to an international network of women leaders in sport.

The 18 month programme provides a unique learning environment that supports the women to further develop their confidence and leadership competencies. One objective of the programme is to raise awareness of issues in women in sport, and this becomes the basis of the special projects. The WSLA participants work in small groups outside of the formal sessions to further enhance their leadership and learning, undertaking projects that are substantive and of direct relevance to the sector.

Find out more about the WSLA Special Projects including presentations of this report from the NZOC [website](#)¹

Kei a tātou tēnei ao; kei a tātau hoki ēnei iti kahurangi.

This is our world; these are the challenges we must strive to overcome.'

(Māori proverb)

¹ <http://www.olympic.org.nz/about-the-nzoc/programmes-and-funding/womens-sport-leadership-academy/>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

This report examines unconscious gender bias in sport, how and why it prevents true gender equality, and the role all involved can play to minimise it. Unconscious bias that impacts women has been described as, “the powerful but subtle and often invisible barriers for women that arise from cultural assumptions, organizational structures, and patterns of interaction that inadvertently benefit men while putting women at a disadvantage. Unconscious bias happens outside of our control. It occurs automatically and is triggered by our brain making a split second assumption about someone. Reducing unconscious bias is one important way to create a more inclusive culture.

Process

In developing this report and its recommendations, we: reviewed relevant information and research, interviewed subject matter experts, assessed case-studies including the diversity and inclusion initiatives of NZ Cricket and High Performance Sport New Zealand, and examined the impact of bias in sporting organisations and environments.

Key themes

Awareness Raising - In order to create the requisite awareness of unconscious bias, a number of approaches are required. These include Implicit Association Tests, training and education, and social marketing.

Inclusive leadership - Some sporting organisations in New Zealand are consciously working towards creating a culture of inclusion for women. Recent initiatives of New Zealand Cricket and High Performance Sport New Zealand provide examples of inclusive leadership.

Recruitment - Unconscious bias can influence hiring decisions within organisations. A number of strategies can help identify bias and provide tools to mitigate against unconscious bias in recruitment.

Early in pathway environments – Opportunities exist to improve the experience of females early in their sport pathways in three key areas: environment, equipment, and enjoyment.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been made in the following areas:

- Raise awareness of unconscious gender bias in New Zealand sport and the role everyone can play in reducing it.
- Inclusive leadership - develop unconscious bias awareness capability in leaders.
- Recruitment - sporting organisations mitigate against unconscious bias in recruitment.
- Early in pathway environment – make the environment in which our children experience sport inclusive and welcoming.

INTRODUCTION

Scope

This report examines unconscious gender bias in sport, how and why it prevents true gender equality, and the role all involved can play to minimise it. It will demonstrate why unconscious (and sometimes conscious) gender bias matters, identify case studies and effective mitigation strategies, and provide recommendations for action in New Zealand sport.

Issues

Where does unconscious bias fit within the broader strategy to champion equality for women and girls in sport?

According to the IOC Gender Equality Report (2018)² there are six factors necessary for the values and practice of gender equality to take hold. They are:

- The leader and the leadership of gender equality.
- Allocating funds specifically for sportswomen and employing funding as an incentive for organisations to implement gender equality.
- Sustain (or in some cases introduce) an inclusive organisational culture.
- Ensure that women who are involved in senior governance positions are assigned roles of influence with decision-making responsibilities.
- Use statutes, policies and the electoral process to entrench gender equality in the organisation.
- Monitor progress, measure and evaluate outcomes, and instil accountability.

A significant barrier to achieving the third factor of creating an inclusive culture, is unconscious bias. But what exactly is an inclusive culture? Culture is defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society. An inclusive culture is one that ensures everyone is treated equally and fairly. While diversity is about differences, inclusion is about behaviour. It is the deliberate act of welcoming diversity and creating an environment where all different kinds of people can thrive and succeed.

Diversity is what you have. Inclusion is what you do.

Accepting and promoting diversity alone is not enough. Diversity is opening the door, but inclusion is the warmth welcoming you in.

In essence, creating an inclusive culture requires a number of complex strategies, one of which is reducing unconscious bias.

² <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/News/2018/03/IOC-Gender-Equality-Report-March-2018.pdf>

While little has been done to address unconscious bias in New Zealand sporting settings, sporting peak bodies certainly endorse the idea of creating inclusive cultures. The New Zealand Olympic Committee has published an 'Inclusion Position Statement'.³ Similarly, Sport New Zealand's Sport Integrity Framework⁴ states:

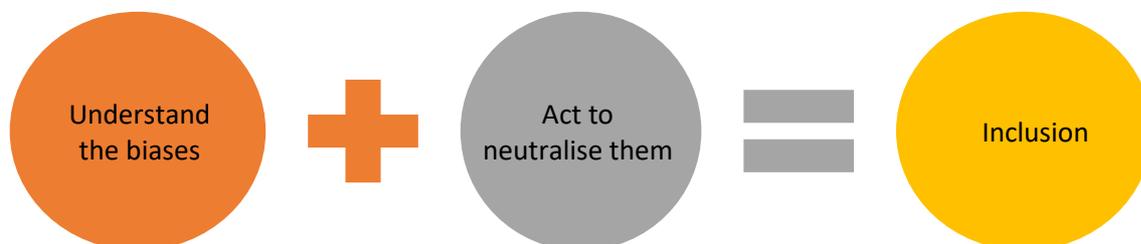
Every Kiwi has the right to participate in sport and recreation within a welcoming and inclusive environment, and to be treated with respect, empathy and positive regard irrespective of age, ability, ethnicity, gender, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs or socio-economic status.

Despite the well-documented benefits of diversity and inclusion, there is an urgent need for a more inclusive culture for women and girls in New Zealand sport. One that addresses the barrier unconscious bias plays in preventing females from drawing the same benefits from sport that males do.

Diversity and inclusion is of course broader than just gender, and women are not a homogenous group. Experiences vary and some of what is discussed in this report relates to intersectionality and the other aspects of diversity such as ethnicity, sexuality etc.

What, then, would an inclusive culture for women look like in New Zealand sport? Imagine all Kiwi women and girls engaged in active and healthy lifestyles, pursuing their participation and performance goals through recreation and sport, and becoming leaders in the New Zealand sport and physical activity system as volunteers, coaches, officials and administrators. Their involvement might ebb and flow as the demands of their families, careers and personal lives change. Real and objectively portrayed role models would have positively impacted their lives, whether in person or through the media. Imagine lifelong participation and involvement, rewarding experiences, social networks, and successful careers in sport and physical activity for all women.

As a first step, bias(es) must be understood. Everyone has them. The second step is deciding what mitigants will be put in place to neutralise them.



In a country that loves sport, the need to have more meaningful conversations about diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias has never been greater.

3 <https://www.olympic.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Inclusion-Position-Statement-Final-Feb-2017.pdf>

4 <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/SportNZ-SportIntegrityFramework-Overview-sm.pdf>



APPROACH

In developing this report and its recommendations, the following steps were taken:

- A review of relevant articles, research, and online material pertaining to diversity and inclusion, and unconscious bias.
- Interviews with the following subject matter experts:
 - Laura Menzies (Diversity and Inclusion Lead, Sport New Zealand) and project advisor
 - Sonia Boland (Women in High Performance Sport Project Manager, HPSNZ)
 - Julie Hood (Governance and Planning Capability Consultant, Sport New Zealand)
 - Chris Morrison (High Performance Leader Capability Consultant, High Performance Sport New Zealand)
 - Simone Spencer (Portfolio Manager: Women & Girls, Goods Sports® & Coach Development, Aktive)
 - Cate Sexton (Head of Women's Rugby Development, New Zealand Rugby)
- Relevant case studies were assessed including diversity and inclusion initiatives of New Zealand Cricket and High Performance Sport New Zealand.
- The impact of bias in key settings was examined including sporting organisations and environments.

REVIEW

A review of relevant research and material on inclusive culture and unconscious bias uncovered a number of noteworthy points. This snapshot includes some of the findings that informed our understanding.

Martinelli⁵ describes unconscious biases as learned social stereotypes about certain people or groups of people that are unintentional and are shaped outside their conscious awareness. Unconscious bias happens outside of our control. It occurs automatically and is triggered by our brain making a quick judgment about a person, a situation, or a group. Unconscious bias is the Achilles heel of inclusion and diversity, and is reflected in split second assumptions based on an individual's diversity.

Recent research cited in the Sport New Zealand Women and Girls in Sport Strategy,⁶ reveals that women only make up 27% of directorships in sport and recreation and hold 40% of leadership and management positions, cited outdated recruitment practices and unconscious bias as notable barriers.

The Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration⁷ describes inclusion as a culture that enables and values the involvement of women in every aspect of sport and physical activity.

Diversity Partners CEO Doctor Kate Spearritt⁸ says, "It's part of being human to make assumptions and associations based on our experiences and interactions with people – even if these are often hidden or unconscious. But we can also overlook or inadvertently exclude people because of unconscious biases and stereotypes associated with different demographic groups and our discomfort with people we perceive to be different to us."

Amongst the growing number of organisations becoming aware of the need to mitigate against unconscious bias, the 2018 Independent Review of Russell McVeagh⁹ found the existence of unconscious bias was a "major risk factor" for the firm. They recommended, "that the firm implements mandatory unconscious bias training for partners and staff at all levels."

Leeds Beckett University looked at privilege and bias in sport coaching in 2016. They discovered that most qualified coaches within UK governing bodies of sport are white (99%) and male (82%). In order to address this, they produced a set of recommendations, which included education on unconscious bias, transparent recruitment practices, mentoring, and updating of resources.¹⁰

5 <https://talentculture.com/the-truth-about-unconscious-bias-in-the-workplace/>

6 <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Govt-Strategy.pdf>

7 <https://iwgwomenandsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Brighton-plus-Helsinki-2014-Declaration-on-Women-and-Sport.pdf>

8 <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inclusive-leadership-sport-challenging-unconscious-bias-spearritt/>

9 Independent Review of Russell McVeagh

10 https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/privelege_and_unconciuous_bias_in_sports_coaching.pdf

A Victorian Government initiative called “Change our game”¹¹ was established following a December 2015 report from the independent inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation. The report made nine recommendations and while many of them are leadership centric, they also address equity in environment and facility building, enabling inclusion through education, and achieving a more balanced media profile for females.

A review of information about inclusion highlighted widespread agreement within sport and more widely on the importance of creating a culture of inclusion. One important way to achieve this is by mitigating against unconscious bias.

AWARENESS RAISING

Everyone has a role to play in reducing unconscious bias. To achieve this, there needs to be a greater understanding of what unconscious bias actually is. By better understanding our own biases, we can bring the unconscious into the conscious part of the mind. This helps to mitigate against bias in the future. In order to create the requisite awareness of unconscious bias, a number of approaches exist. These include:

- unconscious bias testing
- training and education
- social marketing campaigns.

Unconscious bias training

Research has demonstrated that biases thought to be extinguished remain as "mental residue" in most of us. Studies show people can be committed to egalitarianism and reject prejudice, yet still possess hidden negative stereotypes.

"Implicit Association Tests" (IATs) can tap those hidden, or automatic, stereotypes that operate outside our conscious control. Project Implicit¹² – a collaborative research effort between Harvard University, the University of Virginia, and University of Washington – offers such tests. Anyone can test their own unconscious biases by taking an Implicit Association Test. Tests have been designed to capture the brain's learnt automatic associations. Since it is based on time reactions it can bypass our social desirability concerns and tap into unconscious biases, making it more accurate than self-reported measures of prejudice in predicting behaviours. This powerful tool helps individuals understand and examine their own gender biases.

¹¹ <http://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/>

¹² <https://www.projectimplicit.net/>



Everyone has unconscious biases. Women are commonly found to be unconsciously biased against women. The IAT test allows individuals to better understand their own unconscious biases.

There is some evidence that unconscious attitudes may be malleable. For example, imagining strong women leaders has been shown to, at least temporarily, change unconscious biases. By taking a test, the test taker learns about their own unconscious biases. Another benefit is that many test takers can "feel" their hidden prejudices as they perform the tests. Taking the test can force unconscious biases into the conscious part of the mind.

Having discovered one's hidden biases, it may not always be possible to avoid an automatic prejudice, but it can be possible to consciously rectify it. By monitoring unconscious biases, people can strive to change their attitudes before they are expressed through behaviour.

Awareness raising campaigns

Awareness of unconscious bias can also be raised via social marketing. The 'How unconscious is your bias?' campaign¹³ was created in 2019 by Global Women Champions for Change. This is a group of 53 influential New Zealand chief executives and chairs who are taking the lead in driving diversity and inclusion in Kiwi workplaces.

The campaign is a collection of short tongue-in-cheek videos, ads and workplace collateral intended to encourage people to question whether they have a bias, and then demonstrate that overcoming it is as easy as removing gender from the equation.

The campaign poses questions specific to workplaces, such as, "How to explain to a colleague that your boss is the best female manager you've ever worked with?". The answer is to remove mention of gender entirely, making the answer: "She is the best manager I've ever worked with". All ads finish with the tagline "It's not that hard".

Westpac New Zealand Chief Executive David McLean, founding member of Champions for Change says:

"Every one of us has built-in biases that can lead us to make unfair assumptions, no matter how well-intentioned we might be. This campaign highlights some of the ways those (unconscious) biases can impact our workplace so that together we can address and overcome them."

Transpower Chief Executive and Champion for Change Alison Andrew says overcoming unconscious discrimination is critical to creating diverse, inclusive and high-performing workplaces.

"As a business we want to intentionally encourage people to speak up and participate, so it's important to bring conversations about overcoming unconscious bias into our everyday working lives."

13 <https://www.championsforchange.nz/>

Example posters from the campaign:



INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Some sporting organisations in New Zealand are consciously working towards creating a culture of inclusion for women. To explore leadership in this context, we investigated recent initiatives of New Zealand Cricket and High Performance Sport New Zealand (HPSNZ).

New Zealand Cricket

In reviewing relevant gender equity initiatives from New Zealand and overseas, the 2016 review conducted into New Zealand Cricket¹⁴ was notable for its findings and relevance to sport more widely. Historically a male-dominated sport, cricket requires specialist equipment and facilities. The report into cricket sets out the imbalance between males and females wanting to play, and the challenges of sustaining female involvement.

The report highlights the importance of inclusion in several instances. Sport New Zealand's integrity framework statement on inclusion is noted. The New Zealand Cricket Strategic Plan 2017¹⁵ which describes cricket as, "A game for all New Zealanders; a game for life", is referenced. White Ferns Captain, Suzie Bates is quoted saying: "We need the same pathways for girls through the sport as there are for the boys ... at every age group level." Toni Street, broadcaster and former first-class cricketer says: "Female cricketers can't be treated as just an add-on to the male game." The report makes a total of seventeen recommendations across four areas: Governance and Leadership, Delivery channel, Commercial Model, Participation. In referring to these recommendations, report author Sarah Beaman concludes:

¹⁴ https://www.nzc.nz/media/7756/nzcr_j000080_women-and-cricket-document_digital_d1.pdf

¹⁵ https://www.nzc.nz/media/10683/strategic-plan-d01-06_edited.pdf

"I was left in no doubt that the success of them all depends upon achieving that initial, and foundational, cultural realignment: from cricket being a predominantly male sport, to cricket being a sport for all New Zealanders."

For such a cultural realignment to be possible, unconscious bias against women and girls must be considered.

Creating an inclusive culture for women in sporting organisations starts with leaders. Inclusive leadership enables everyone to feel valued, heard, respected and contributing to the culture and environment. New Zealand Cricket have undergone a conspicuous shift in terms of the numbers of women on boards all over the country, specifically to ensure the recruitment and retention of quality female candidates to boards at all levels. The proportion of females on the New Zealand Cricket Board has gone from 11% to 44%, Major Associations have moved from 4% to 28%, and District Associations from 7% to 14%. This means a total of 43 women now bring different perspectives to cricket board tables for the undoubted benefit of the game.¹⁶

High Performance Sport NZ

HPSNZ has taken deliberate and future-focussed steps towards developing women in high performance sport through a \$2.7m pilot project launched in October 2019. The project, which runs to the end of June 2021, will deliver to one of the 24 commitments in the Government Strategy for Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation.

The programme is in accordance with the organisation's strategic goals including; partnering with National Sport Organisations (NSOs) to build world-leading coaching and high performance programme leadership.¹⁷

The pilot project is being delivered through three main streams:

- The Women in High Performance Sport Residency Fund that has established a cohort of highly capable women leaders and coaches through providing fixed term residency positions in NSOs;
- A High Performance Sport Breakthrough Coaching Programme for Women that is developing a talent pool of future HP coaches; and
- Working in partnership with NSOs to create sustainable and inclusive HP sport environments.

Women in High Performance Sport Pilot Project Manager, Sonia Boland, says the Residency Fund is delivering on the leadership stream of the Women in High Performance Sport pilot project and seeks to establish a cohort of talented, highly capable, future female leaders and high performance coaches through offering 18 month fixed term employment opportunities within NSOs' high performance programmes.

¹⁶ <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Govt-Strategy.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://hpsnz.org.nz/content/uploads/2018/03/HPSNZ-Strategic-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>

The investment outcomes¹⁸ for the pilot include high performance sport environments evolving to meet the needs of a diverse workforce to be better placed to take full advantage of the competitive edge diversity and inclusion can provide.

HPSNZ will implement follow-up initiatives to promote the embedding of inclusive non-biased practices and ultimately recalibrate environments to support these changes. To achieve this, the following key areas of support will be provided to the host NSOs to access additional assistance from HPSNZ to support diversity and inclusion work. Where appropriate this assistance will be undertaken in collaboration with Sport New Zealand, and may include support for:

- unconscious bias training for employees;
- developing and/or implementing a diversity and inclusion strategy;
- reviewing recruitment and retention strategies and other HR policies; and
- undertaking a gender pay gap assessment.

RECRUITMENT WITHIN SPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Unconscious bias is one of the key barriers to progressing diversity and inclusion in organisations. Recruitment and selection can enhance leadership capability, provided the settings are conducive to success.

Six traits that can distinguish inclusive leaders are:

- visible commitment
- humility
- awareness of bias
- curiosity
- cultural intelligence
- effective collaboration.¹⁹

Inclusive leadership needs to be championed by both men and women. Sport New Zealand have set a target of 40% gender balance on all its national and regional investment partners receiving more than \$50,000 per annum in investment by December 2021.²⁰ This target will ensure that more women are represented at a governance level across the New Zealand sporting sector, ensuring more female voices at the table being valued and listened too. Often women can feel intimidated and treated dismissively in

¹⁸ Women in High Performance Sport Pilot Project Manager Sonia Boland

¹⁹ <https://hbr.org/2019/03/why-inclusive-leaders-are-good-for-organizations-and-how-to-become-one>

²⁰ <https://sportnz.org.nz/about-us/who-we-are/what-were-working-towards/board-gender-diversity-target-page/>

male dominated environments.²¹ Creating an inclusive leadership environment at the governance level will set a standard within the sporting sector.

The Institute of Directors suggest the first two steps to getting diverse talent on boards are to:

1. Create an inclusive culture
2. Recognise and address unconscious bias.²²

Gender balance at senior levels of sporting organisations is a clear win for the sector.²³ Boards will benefit from a more gender-diverse membership and can encourage more women to enter sports organisations below board level adding value and insights on how to engage more women and girls in sport. Howard²⁴ advised that organisations with higher diversity have been proven to work more effectively and perform better than those lacking diversity. An international study of 1000+ organisations supports this view, finding gender diversity correlates to more productivity in organisations where gender diversity and balance is the norm. The research showed that societies and organisations who value diversity attract talent, develop more innovative ideas and therefore increase workplace productivity and cohesion.²⁵

Current situation

Unconscious bias can influence hiring decisions within any organisation. This often goes unnoticed by leaders and the hiring panel themselves. Our social groups, cultural environment, previous experiences of people and situations all influence unconscious bias, which can create barriers to an inclusive culture and those who do not fit within our unconscious narrative. That means excluding different ideas, experiences, perspectives and understanding. Without intent, unconscious bias interferes with good decision-making, and criteria that is irrelevant to the job is used to make a decision.²⁶

Evidence

Often women feel they need to meet more of the role requirements than men do. LinkedIn's data shows that women are 16% less likely than men to apply for a job they've viewed, often because they feel that they're not 100% qualified for the role.²⁷ Victorian State Government²⁸ found that women are more likely than men to question their ability to take on a leadership role, even when they have the skills needed for the job. Studies show in general people don't want to waste time applying for a position if they do not possess the required skills and experience outlined in the job qualifications.²⁹

²¹ http://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/39062/final20_20recruit20and20retent20guidelines.pdf

²² <https://www.iod.org.nz/resources-and-insights/guides-and-resources/board-diversity/#>

²³ <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Women-and-Girls-Govt-Strategy.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.hcamag.com/au/news/general/the-danger-of-unconscious-bias-in-hr-decisions-and-how-to-overcome-it/151339>

²⁵ <https://hbr.org/2019/02/research-when-gender-diversity-makes-firms-more-productive>

²⁶ <https://resources.workable.com/stories-and-insights/unconscious-bias-in-recruitment>

²⁷ <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/diversity/2019/8-tips-to-improve-gender-diversity-of-recruiting-pipeline>

²⁸ http://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/39062/final20_20recruit20and20retent20guidelines.pdf

²⁹ <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/student/140/>

Interventions

Developing job descriptions that simplify requirements to essential skills and expectations is crucial in encouraging more female applicants. The language used throughout job adverts and descriptions can also inadvertently put women off applying. Leaders should ensure gender-neutral terminology is used in job titles, descriptions and advertising to promote an organisations commitment to inclusiveness and equal opportunity. Transparency with hiring protocols, application of organisational benefits and policies, and providing equal opportunities are all essential to building an inclusive and trusting culture.

Strategies can help identify bias and provide tools to mitigate unconscious bias in recruitment. In order to implement appropriate interventions to reduce bias, an organisation must first understand where in the process bias is impacting decisions by monitoring each aspect of the process.³⁰ This is a crucial event of an organisation and lapses or reduced quality in recruitment can discourage applicants, perpetuate previous misunderstood prejudices and undermine achievement of gender fairness objectives. Interventions to mitigate this can include:

- ensuring the position description is worded specifically and inclusively,
- ensure role titles are prestigious enough to reflect the work expected,
- widening the search parameters,
- developing career pathways,
- introducing blind applicant screening,
- utilising automated screening tools,
- implementing structured interviews,
- using consistent interview questions,
- installing gender balanced recruitment panels,
- utilising work sample tests.

Undertaking a diversity and gender audit can provide organisations with key data to set targets throughout all levels and identify any gaps in female representation across the organisation. It is important that organisations know their baseline and what they want to achieve. Making a commitment to increasing gender balance and ensuring women are provided with equal opportunity for development and leadership roles will support closing the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap is the difference in remuneration between men and women. Many female workers in New Zealand work in female-dominated occupations, which tend to be lower paid.³¹

³⁰ <https://resources.workable.com/stories-and-insights/unconscious-bias-in-recruitment>

³¹ <https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/pay-equity/gender-pay-gap/>

There are a number of factors that contribute to the gender pay gap, the type of occupations women undertake, the value put on 'female dominated' occupations, work arrangements, caring responsibilities and primary carer leave which tend to reduce the opportunity for development and access to higher paid positions. Gender pay gaps exist across virtually every industry. Currently New Zealand has a gender pay gap of 9%, the gap tends to be higher when women are underrepresented in leadership positions.

It is also important to ensure that men and women are paid the same for doing the same roles.³² Presenting the salary range on an advert or job description can encourage more female applicants and block out gender bias during negotiations.³³ LinkedIn found that 68% of women want to see transparency with remuneration offered for a role before applying.³⁴ Inclusion scores are 45% higher for workplaces that are perceived to have fair and transparent practices around pay, performance management and promotions.³⁵ Undertaking a fair job sizing process and having a clear and concise remuneration system where employees can see their opportunity for progression can build trust and commitment within the organisation. Sports organisations need to establish a talent pipeline and foster progression for women and girls in sport by developing progressive steps with mentorship and training.³⁶

Overcoming and minimising unconscious bias is crucial to a diverse and inclusive environment. Awareness training is the first step to unravelling unconscious bias.³⁷ Providing training for boards, NSOs and athletes can help them understand and recognise unconscious bias when it arises and how it can impact our awareness and assumptions about situations and people. The Treasury Executive Leadership Team³⁸ is an example of where unconscious bias training has been undertaken to raise awareness of how biases can influence the recruitment process.

The induction and on-boarding process for NSOs including athletes is a prime opportunity to welcome and embed new members. An informative induction process helps to ensure new members can start their new role feeling confident, supported, and aware of the organisations values, policies, procedures and commitment to an inclusive culture.³⁹ The induction process is an opportunity to discuss the NSOs commitment to inclusion, diversity, and opportunities for development, training and education. Unconscious bias awareness can be embedded into this process, raising awareness through implicit bias testing and training on how to mitigate its influence in decision-making. Holding leaders to account to embed diversity and inclusion in everyday work practices and raising awareness of

³² <https://www.globalwomen.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GW-Inclusive-workplaces-in-NZ-report-WEB.pdf>

³³ *Bias in Recruitment and Selection*. Victoria University of Wellington, Centre for Labour, Employment and Work.

³⁴ <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/diversity/2019/8-tips-to-improve-gender-diversity-of-recruiting-pipeline>

³⁵ <https://www.globalwomen.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/GW-Inclusive-workplaces-in-NZ-report-WEB.pdf>

³⁶ https://www.womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/FINAL_Checklist-for-change_Trophy_Women_031115.pdf?x99836

³⁷ <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/7-practical-ways-to-reduce-bias-in-your-hiring-process.aspx>

³⁸ <https://treasury.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2014-01/sp-diversity-inclusion-12apr17.pdf>

³⁹ http://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/39062/final20_20recruit20and20retent20guidelines.pdf

unconscious bias can help illuminate where biases are coming from and how they affect hiring decisions. We may not be able to completely discard our unconscious bias, but, ultimately, we'll be more conscious of it when it does happen. Awareness and diversity training in hiring can help leaders identify personal biases and create a more inclusive conversation.

EARLY IN PATHWAY EXPERIENCES

The environment provided for sporting participants can affect participation and much of that in New Zealand is a product of sports aimed at participation of males. Some of this bias is even conscious, such as allocation of practice facilities. This section explores the extent to which unconscious bias creates and perpetuates this imbalance. The competitive nature of sport can create at least the perception of exclusion, simply because the objective is to find a winner. While this applies to all participants, a key challenge for inclusion of women and girls in the sporting context is therefore mitigating this across genders. This may involve re-defining or even ignoring what 'success' is and what it affords participants.

Current state

To date much of the allocated benefits in sport, such as funding and accolades are performance based. This perpetuates the perception that a certain set of physical attributes and/or skills, or both, are superior. In turn this could disincentivize participation of those who do not reach certain levels of proficiency. In some instances,⁴⁰ women can also require assistance to ensure they are being as inclusive as they need to be of other women.

Interventions

Three key areas where an opportunity exists to improve the experience of females early in their sport pathways have been identified. These are:

- Environment (physical and social)
- Equipment
- Enjoyment.

All three currently create and sustain barriers, the common thread being their traditional bias towards male participants.

In terms of environment, female participation rates in sport and active recreation remain lower than males. In New Zealand, females participate 12% less than males.⁴¹ Research has found this to be

⁴⁰ <http://www.theinclusionsolution.me/a-point-of-view-a-woman-in-sports-uncovers-her-bias-against-women-in-sports-unconscious-bias-national-football-league/>

⁴¹ <https://sportnz.org.nz/managing-sport/search-for-a-resource/research/active-nz-survey-2017>

particularly true in community sport and recreation club settings.⁴² As noted by the International Working Group on Women and Sport:⁴³

“Women’s participation in sport is influenced by the extent, variety and accessibility of facilities. The planning, design and management of these should appropriately and equitably meet the particular needs of the women in the community”.

Historically, sporting facilities have been designed primarily to meet the needs of male participants.⁴⁴ Today, community sport and recreation facilities are becoming out-dated and, in a vast range of venues, do not provide the range of amenities that attract and sustain women and girls throughout their life. To encourage more women and girls to become involved in sport and active recreation, user-friendly facilities are required. These need to allow privacy, have enough facilities to accommodate teams of any gender and be maintained to a sufficient standard.

Access to sporting facilities can be particularly limited for women and girls with disabilities.^{45 46} Access can be limited by physical barriers such as inaccessible entrances, reception areas, changing rooms and sports facilities, lack of accessible transport and parking, etc. Lack of information in accessible formats for visually impaired and/or hearing-impaired people can also create barriers.

Women and girls can’t play sport if they can’t get access to facilities at suitable times.⁴⁷ Too often, sports halls prioritise male sport so that men get facilities at their preferred times, while women have to make do with less convenient times.

Most premier New Zealand sporting facilities still boast a huge imbalance between urinals and toilet cubicles in their changing facilities. Facilities are not typically any more fit-for-purpose in the community space. Sport New Zealand have provided a high-level framework⁴⁸ to encourage collaboration in the development of facilities, with one key objective being to ensure they are fit-for-purpose.

Cate Sexton, Head of Women’s Rugby Development at New Zealand Rugby and former manager of the White Ferns says:

“Having been to numerous world cups across both Rugby and Cricket, the one thing that makes competing much harder is the lack of toilets in the changing facilities. If there was one thing that changed in order to deal with the female unfriendly nature of sport it would be that all of our facilities we use for international competitions had enough toilets for a team of females to use”

⁴² <https://sport.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/female-friendly-sport-infrastructure-guidelines>

⁴³ <https://iwgwomenandsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Brighton-plus-Helsinki-2014-Declaration-on-Women-and-Sport.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://sport.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/female-friendly-sport-infrastructure-guidelines>

⁴⁵ <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Sport-NZ-Disability-Plan-2019.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://www.lrsport.org/uploads/barriers-to-sports-participation-for-women-girls-17.pdf>

⁴⁷ <https://www.lrsport.org/uploads/barriers-to-sports-participation-for-women-girls-17.pdf>

⁴⁸ <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/managing-sport/facilities/NZ-Facilities-Framework.pdf>

Ill-fitting or unsuitable equipment is not only a barrier to effective execution of skills, it can be a comfort or injury prevention consideration. Often gear is out-of-date or passed on from male sports and makes participation less appealing and simply put, a lot more difficult for females. Clothing and equipment for sports can be expensive and is also quite revealing, which create problems for women and girls,

Strict requirements about clothing can also prevent some ethnic minority females from participating. For example, swimming pools that don't allow women to wear T-shirts over their swimming costumes, and clubs that insist members wear tight fitting or revealing uniforms, can exclude those who follow certain faiths⁴⁹ as well as those who are self-conscious of their bodies.

Sports attire originates from men's sport and decision makers have assumed this is appropriate for women. Western fashion promotes increasingly revealing clothes for women and girls, whereas social norms in some cultures prohibit exposure of the female body. For example, Muslim girls and women who practise Islam are only allowed to appear in front of men in their prescribed dress code.

In order to ensure an environment is completely inclusive and has considered the needs of all participants, equipment and clothing needs to be comfortable, practical and most importantly not a deterrent to involvement.

When thinking about enjoyment, Sport New Zealand found that 70% of young females (10–17 years) identified fun as their primary reason for taking part. It is imperative that an inclusive, free from bias sporting environment is designed to maximise fun and therefore participation.

Sport is an emotive word and topic. How young people perceive what is being offered can depend on their response to that word. Whilst there are positive associations with sport, many young people have a strong negative response to the language of sport. This can drive non-participation.⁵⁰

Battling with inappropriate facilities, equipment and attire, or feeling foolish due to how it looks can directly affect enjoyment. So too can only having training at 9.00pm because that is when your sessions are always allocated. When considering the barriers identified in the Sport NZ case for change,⁵¹ such as lack of confidence, feeling judged, being able to fit it in around other commitments, the opportunities for basic changes are clear.

Outcomes

Front-of-mind associations with the word "sport" often focus on traditional, competitive sports. Narrow perceptions create barriers linked to past experience, levels of interest and perceived competence. The concern with not being embarrassed in front of your peers is universal.

⁴⁹ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/395073/muslim-leaders-request-clarification-on-swimwear-policy-at-public-pools>

⁵⁰ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/10113/youth-insight-pack.pdf>

⁵¹ <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Infographic-landscape-4-6.pdf>

Ethnicity plays a greater role in limiting participation by young women than men.⁵² A growth in the young Asian population between 2001 and 2011 coupled with the low participation rates of Asian females has influenced the overall rate of participation by young women.

Consciously (and unconsciously) the majority of supply of sport to young people targets the needs of the minority who are already most engaged and in places (e.g. education settings) where they are already more likely to be active.

⁵² <https://www.sportengland.org/media/10113/youth-insight-pack.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Awareness Raising

Raise awareness of unconscious gender bias in New Zealand sport and the role everyone can play in reducing it.

Ways to do this include:

1. Implicit Association Test (IAT) – Encourage everyone involved in sport in New Zealand to take the online Harvard University Implicit Association Test to better understand their own unconscious biases
2. Education – Incorporate sessions on Unconscious Bias at relevant conferences and courses (e.g.) Sport New Zealand Connections Conference, HPSNZ conference, Women in Sport Summit, coaching courses
3. Case-studies – Disseminate gender equity case-studies that showcase how to reduce Unconscious Bias in sport organisations.
4. Inclusion champions – Identify and provide inclusion champions with Unconscious Bias training and skills to empower others, including: HPSNZ Residence Fund and Coach Breakthrough recruits, relevant high profile athletes and coaches.
5. NSO capability – include Unconscious Bias training and strategies in the Sport New Zealand Capability Programme and support RSTs in similar ways
6. Social Media – share information about Unconscious Bias on social media
7. Public Relations – Work with key journalists to seed stories and examples of Unconscious Gender Bias in sport

Inclusive leadership

Develop unconscious bias awareness capability in managers and leaders by:

1. Designing, piloting and progressively rolling-out a customised workshop that can be delivered in person or online
2. Including Unconscious Bias training in governance training and in sports leadership curriculum (eg Sport NZ Leadership Framework, tertiary programmes)
3. Measuring success by establishing, “what are the behaviours we’ll see to know we have succeeded” and devising a method to track this
4. Introducing a diversity and inclusion policy that focuses on equal opportunity



Recruitment and selection

Sporting organisations to mitigate against unconscious bias in recruitment by:

1. Providing pre-process unconscious bias training for leaders and recruitment panels
2. Completing a diversity audit to inform training and position description analysis ensuring job titles use gender neutral terminology
3. Ensuring role titles are prestigious enough to reflect the work
4. Using inductions for athletes, employees and volunteers as an opportunity to shape systematic behaviour

Early in pathway environment

Make the environment in which our children experience sport inclusive and welcoming by understanding the current state of facilities, clothing and equipment offered and how suitable they are for girls and gender-neutral participants, ensuring:

1. Girls and women can have privacy in changing rooms and in facilities.
2. Equipment available for women and girls is suitable (e.g. that there is a variety of sizes) and that it's suitable for women with disabilities.
3. A review of the allocation of facilities and pitch time, with equitable access during peak times for women's sports. Provide information in a variety of formats so that all groups have equal access. Ensure staff undergo regular equality training.
4. Collateral and imagery is unbiased and targets all participants, particularly when planning programmes, promotion or media.
5. Support is provided to enhance awareness of unconscious bias in parents and volunteers