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23

GENDER EQUALITY REPORT

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Gender Equality

In 2022, World Taekwondo (WT) took a significant step further on its sustainability journey by developing a new Sustainability Strategy. The strategy includes an implementation plan with several activities focused on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) and Community, which has the Goal to “*Ensure that minority groups and those that are under-represented in society are included, valued, and treated equitably in and through Taekwondo.*”

Gender equality is an issue that falls within the DEI and Community strategic focus area. Here, WT has the objective to achieve balanced gender ratios at Council and Committee levels as well as at the senior director level within the organisation. Not only does WT see this as an important contribution to global societal goals, but research has shown that having a more balanced male and female board in sports governance contributes to a better work environment.

While achieving this objective will involve considerable effort at an organisational level, WT recognises that, to ensure lasting systemic change, collaboration with the global Taekwondo family is crucial.

This report serves the purpose to outline the societal imperative of gender equality, while reflecting on WT’s milestones over the years and reporting on current gender statistics within WT and across its Member National Associations (MNAs) and Continental Unions (CUs), to make the case for future initiatives, as summarised in the final section.

Gender Equality in Society

5 GENDER
EQUALITY



ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, by 2030.

As the UN explains, “Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a *peaceful, prosperous and sustainable* world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.”



WT is committed to contributing to the SDGs, as is clearly stated in its Sustainability Strategy, and aligns itself with SDG 5 on the topic of gender equality.

Further information regarding the importance of achieving gender equality in society can be found in this [infographic](#) produced by UN Women, as well as throughout the UN Women website in general.

Gender Equality in Taekwondo

Taekwondo, like many sports, reflects society. For example, the move towards the equal gender split of athletes competing in the Olympic Games over the 20th century reflects the increase of countries granting women the right to vote over the same period. Women were first given the right to compete at the Olympic Games in 1900, where 2% of athletes were female. That figure has been steadily rising over the years, with Paris 2024 committed to being the first Olympic Games to reach full 50% female athlete participation.

And yet, conversely, sport is in the rather unique position of being able to influence societal change. Through this lens, WT sees its responsibility to address its own impacts and use its communication channels to exert a positive influence in society.

WT has implemented several governance-related and community-focused initiatives over the years in its efforts to contribute towards gender equality. The following is a list of milestones achieved to date.

- WT events provide **equal opportunities for male and female athletes**, in terms of competing in the same venue, having the same competition format, equal prize money, and going through the same anti-doping and related procedures, just to name a few. In addition, WT has mixed team gender events.
- At **least one female member per Continental Union** was elected to the WT Council in 2021, to achieve greater gender balance in the group. In addition, the female candidate who received the highest number of votes was **promoted to Vice President**.
- Candidates applying for **WT permanent committee positions** for the 2023-2025 cycle were selected based on the requirements and priorities of WT, including geographical distribution, gender balance, special skills, experience, and unique backgrounds.

Gender Equality in Taekwondo



- WT was the first international federation to send an **equal number of male and female referees** to an Olympic Games, in Rio, in 2016. It has developed and implemented a strategy to ensure half of its referees are women, which involves identifying and training female referees, increasing their technical knowledge and ensuring they qualify to international standards.
- WT was the **first combat sport to allow wearing of the hijab** under the headgear, first at the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and then via an official rule change in 2009. This rule change and policy allowed for the rise in Arabic and Muslim women winning medals at its events globally.
- In December 2019, the WT Council **adopted an Anti-Discrimination Policy**, which has been cited by ASOIF as a “Best Practice” example in its 2022 Governance Survey. The objective of this policy is, *“To endorse diversity and support equal rights, and seeking to guard against discrimination both individual (committed by individuals) and structural (arising from policies or procedures that disadvantage certain groups).”*



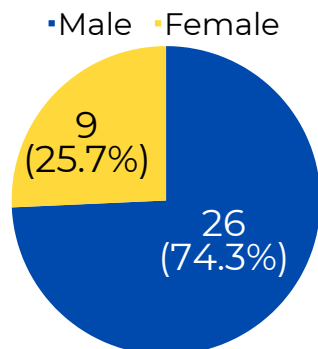
Gender Equality in Taekwondo

- World Taekwondo has hosted its first two **Gender Equity & Women Leadership Forums**. The first, in 2020, was held in partnership with the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee, and the second, in 2021, was held together with UK Sport: The aim of the forums was to increase representation of women on the Executive Council.
- In 2023, World Taekwondo selected Ms. Suvi Mikkonen from Finland as a beneficiary of the WISH Programme. WISH was launched as a mentorship and training programme designed to **help female coaches progress into high-performance coaching roles** at national, continental and international competitions, including major events such as the Olympic Games. This initiative aligns with the IOC's Gender Equality and Inclusion Objectives for 2021-2024 promoting women's representation in sports leadership roles.
- The Taekwondo Humanitarian Foundation **targets an equal number of girls and boys** to participate in their youth projects across seven countries. In 2023, girls currently occupy 37 per cent of participants, and the numbers have improved over the years. There was a 30 per cent increase in female participants at the Azraq refugee camp in Jordan in 2020.
- WT supports Natsiraishe Maritsa's efforts to **combat child marriage** through Taekwondo in Zimbabwe (link to story). Natsiraishe was awarded the Winner for Africa at the 2021 IOC Women and Sport Awards.
- As part of the 2023 Development Program, World Taekwondo supports individual female athletes who can potentially qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Naqsh Hamdani (Pakistan), Aissata Mohamed SIBY (Mali), Sharon Nafula WAKOLI (Kenya), and Elizabeth Oluchi ANYANACHO (Nigeria) received scholarships for their training and participation in WT-promoted and recognized competitions.

The following two sections use figures from the MNA Survey and Global Membership System (GMS) database to quantify the gender balance at WT and MNA level.

Gender Equality at WT Level

WT Council (2021-2025)

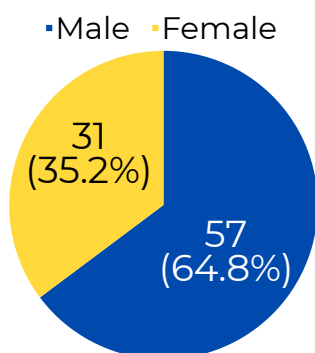


9 (25.7%) Female and 26 (74.3%) Male*

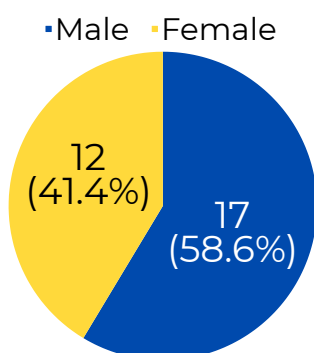
**Including President, Secretary General, Treasurer, and Auditor*

WT Committees (2023-2025)

Appointees



Leadership

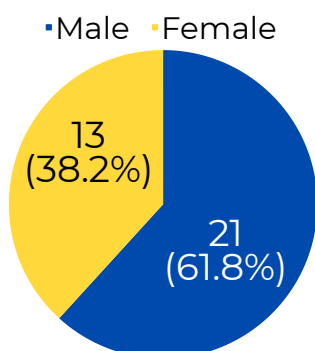


From 480 applications, there were 88 appointees, 31 (35.2%) of which were women.

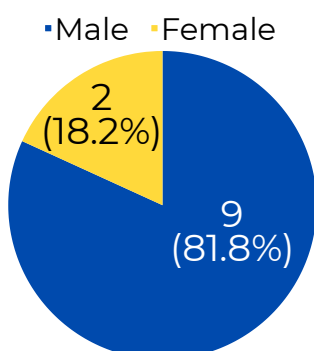
Out of the 29 leadership positions (Chairs and Vice Chairs), 12 (41.4%) are held by women.

WT Secretariat

Staff



Leadership



Out of a total of 34 staff members* at Seoul and Lausanne Office, 13 (38.2%) are women.

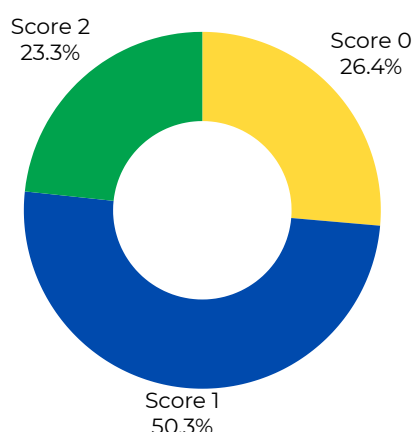
Out of the 11 leadership positions* (directors and above), 2 (18.2%) are held by women.

**Including President and Secretary General*

Gender Equality at MNA Level

MNA Leadership

- Out of 213 MNAs, there are 10 female presidents and 35 female secretaries general.
- The following infographic from the MNA Survey 2022 shows the overall picture of female representation at Executive Board level among the 163 MNAs that participated in the survey.



23.3%

38 MNAs have more than 30% of female representation in the Executive Board or equivalent.

50.3%

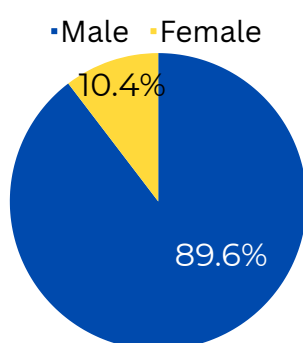
82 MNAs have female representation, but it is less than 30%.

26.4%

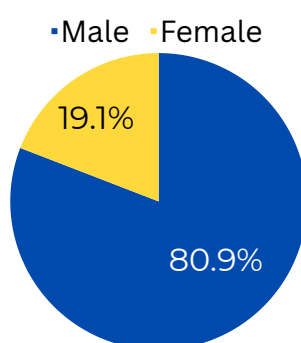
43 MNAs do not have or did not provide verifiable evidence.

- The next six charts demonstrate the gender split across various key roles within all 182 WT MNAs, in 2023.

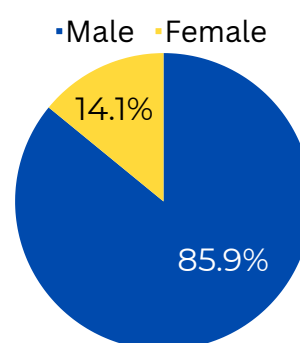
Executive



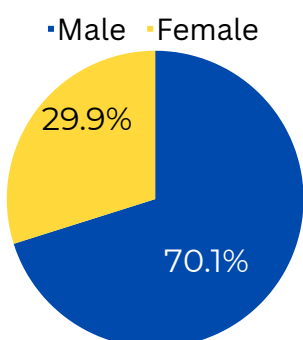
Official



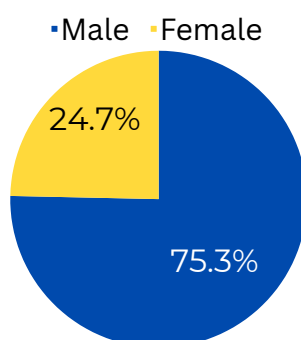
Coach



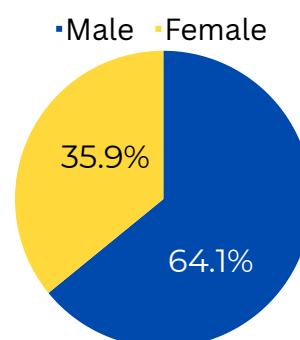
Referee



Doctor



Physiotherapist



Planning for an Equal Future

The Olympic Games in Rio in 2016 may have been the first time that a tournament team of Taekwondo referees had a 50-50 gender split, but, as the figures show, we are still some way off making this a practical policy at major events, and from expecting CUs and MNAs to follow suit.

We see the gender split at member and leadership position on the WT Committees as a positive step in the right direction. However, in all other roles considered in this report, females are underrepresented at both WT and MNA level.

WT intends to continue building on past milestones by developing a strategic approach to gender equality that is aimed to improve the gender balance across the global Taekwondo family. It sees its role as that of *governing, educating on, and promoting* this issue, in line with the UN Women's Guidelines for gender-responsive sports organizations.

Some of the internal (I) and external (E) activities to World Taekwondo under each of these pillars that are planned include:

Governance

- Assess the status within WT and MNAs to identify any gaps and, if necessary, **develop a strategy** to improve gender equality across the global Taekwondo family. (I)
- Embed clear directives into **MNA and WT regulations**, including:
 - One female deputy general secretary within every MNA, as part of their statutes (E) and
 - Quotas at competition-level (see World Athletics female coaches target) (E)

Education

- Extending current WT 'Self-improvement Training' to ensure mandatory **gender equality training for all staff**, including executives (I)
 - As part of this, run **leadership and mentoring programmes** for WT female staff members (I)

Planning for an Equal Future

Education (cont.)

- Develop 2-hour **event workshops**, to be delivered to Council executives, support staff, referees, athletes, coaches, and officials at events (separate to technical meeting)
 - Work with the WT Education dept. to create safe-space, face-to-face workshops, with **gender equality booths** dispensing information during events
 - Consider the Safeguarding Officer model, or similar – a 7-month **train-the-trainer course on gender equality**, with certification – as a possible future initiative
- Open-up a new category for Female Leadership within WT's Development Programme to allow for **funding to lower tier MNAs** (E)
 - This would be run in conjunction with Grand Prix events to ensure that top coaches would be present
 - It is intended to give the opportunity for women to be part of top body without feeling the pressure
- Implement education programmes and seminars to help develop skills across various MNA roles (in addition to PMC and Safeguarding). (E)
 - For example, embed content within existing education platform to ensure this is a mandatory component of receiving a **coaching licence**

Promotion

- Produce and publish a **skills matrix** as part of efforts to increase the pipeline of skilled women within MNAs on Committees, using THF as an example (E)
 - Promote understanding that these positions do not only need to be filled by senior decision-makers within MNAs
 - This is an opportunity to headhunt worthy candidates
- Appoint gender equality ambassadors among athletes, referees, and coaches, as part of a team of Sustainability Ambassadors, to encourage greater female participation in the sport. (E)
 - Link to mentor programme

Planning for an Equal Future

Promotion (cont.)

- Further promote gender equality through community initiatives, including those managed by THF, Taekwondo for All Committee, and Taekwondo Cares, prioritising the topic in terms of selection of programmes, etc. (E)
- Become a signatory of UN Sports for Generation Equality Framework (E)

Next steps

- Plan strategy and approach to senior decision-makers, including Sustainability Committee

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