

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN WORLD ROWING CHAMPIONSHIPS AND OLYMPIC GAMES FOR 10-YEAR PERIOD

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to evaluate the development of the women rowing for the period of 10 years - from 2013-2023. The aim is to estimate whether the undertaken steps by the International Rowing Federation for increasing the number of female participants at Olympics and World Rowing Championships are achieving the desired goals. After analysing the number of participants, the statistics show that the female participation in Olympics and World Rowing Championships for the period of last 10 years has slowly progressed. Following the change of the WCH programme in 2018 the percentage of female compared to men participants increases from 37% in 2017 to 44% in 2019 and 2023. And for first time the rowers participating at the Olympics in Tokyo 2021 reached gender equality - 50% women and 50% men participated. This confirms the undertaking steps by World Rowing have a positive effect on the female participation in Olympics and World Rowing Championships. Originating as a male sport, rowing is dominated by men nowadays the percentage ratio of men to women is still in favour of men.

Key words: rowing, women's participation, gender equality

Introduction

World Rowing, the International Rowing Federation (formerly named FISA), is empowered by its 159-member National Rowing Federations, the National Olympic Committees and the International Olympic Committee to govern the sport of rowing. Founded in 1892 FISA was the first international sport federation to be established and rowing has been in the Olympic Programme since 1896, the first Olympic Games of the modern era. The goals and objectives of World Rowing are to: Develop, Promote, Present and Govern the sport of rowing. Its main mission is to make rowing a universally practiced and globally relevant sport, and to spread the sport in all its forms.

The Olympic Charter states that it is the IOC role to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women. In this regard, in 2012, the World Rowing Council agreed that the International Rowing Federation should take steps towards increasing the numbers of women in rowing and to ultimately reach equality in numbers of participants and number of events at World Championships and Olympics. The WCH events' programme, also the number of participants by boats and athletes have been evaluated. As a result of this, the Olympic Rowing Programme was changed after Rio 2016 and the men and women events for Tokyo Olympics were equalled – 7 for men and 7 for women. The World Rowing Championships Programme was also adjusted to reflect the Olympic one and the non-Olympic events in the WCH programme were also equalled for both genders – 3 male events and 3 female ones.

Material & methods

The methodological basis for this study stands on documents analysis related to the accreditation, entries and results for the World Championships and Olympic Games Qualification system.

The tasks of the study are related to determining the dynamics of development in terms of number of boats and female competitors, analysis of their participation in Olympic and non-Olympic disciplines.

The main indicator of the dynamics of the development of women's rowing is the number of participating athletes and boats in the WCH and OG.

Results

The number of women participants by year for the period from 2013-2023 at Olympics and World Championships is presented on Figure 1 below. An increase in the numbers of women participation at World Championships is observed in each Olympic cycle. The peak is at the 2019 WCH where 451 female rowers have participated. As for the Olympic Games there is a decrease in the number at Olympics from 289 in Rio 2016 to 263 in Tokyo 2021. This is due to the Olympic Qualification system set by the IOC and the cut down in the Qualification quota for Rowing. The average number of female participants for the studied period remains at around 350. It should be mentioned here that due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Non-Olympic WCH in 2020 had been canceled and the Tokyo Olympics postponed to 2021. This have had a negative effect on the participation numbers at World Rowing Championships.



Fig. 1 Women participation at Olympics and World Championships for 10-year period (2013-2023)

The number of female boats by year for the period from 2013-2023 at Olympics and World Championships is presented on Figure 2 below. The number of boats at WCH increases within each Olympic cycle and we observe the same tendency as we already analyzed about the number of participants. Again, the decrease in the number by boats at the Olympics – from 118 in Rio to 103 in Tokyo is due to the IOC Qualification system and its policy of cutting down the number of participants in all sports. The difference here is that the average number of boats has slowly progressed from 2013 to 2023. With the unchanged average number of women participants for the 10-year period this shows that the number of small boats entries (singles and doubles) has been increased at the WCH.



Fig.2 Women participation by Boats at Olympics and World Championships for 10-year period (2013-2023)

Because we analyze the development of women's rowing only for itself as a dynamic, it is also important to see the relation to the male part of this sport. Figure 3 shows this ratio for the analyzed period in percentages.

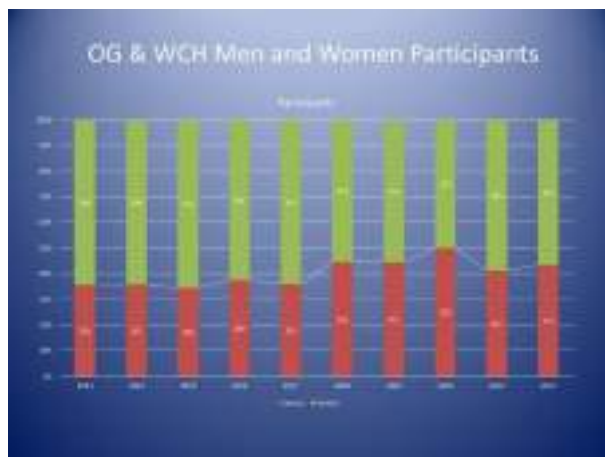


Fig. 3 Relation of men and women participants in percentages for the analyzed period 2013-2023

The women participants at WCH in 2013, 2014 and 2017 is 37%, in 2015 it is 35% and slightly under 40% at the Rio Olympics. After the WCH programme change in 2018 and the equality in the number of events for men and women we observe an increase to 44% of the women participation at World Championships. And for first time the rowers participating at the Olympics in Tokyo 2021 reached gender equality - 50% men and 50% women participated.



Fig. 4 Relation of men and women boats in percentages for the analyzed period 2013-2023

Figure 4 presents the relation of men and women boats in percentages for 10-year period. An increase in the ratio of women boats after 2018 to 43% at the WCH is observed again and the gender equality in boats is reached at the Tokyo Olympics. This confirms again the positive effect of the undertaken steps by the International Rowing Federation towards increasing the women participation at WCH and Olympics.

Discussion

The change of the World Championships events programme in 2018 and the increase of the Women Olympic events for the Tokyo Olympics have had a positive effect on the women senior participation. Nowadays the percentage ratio of men to women is still in favour of men but the percentage of women participation at WCH has increased from 37% in 2013 to 44% in 2023. Further studies will need to be conducted in order to follow up the development of the women rowing at junior and U23 level.

Conclusions

Originating as a male sport, rowing is still dominated by men today. In recent years, conditions have been created by World Rowing for the inclusion of more women in it and so far, this has led to some improvement in the ratio of men to women at senior level. Additional measures are needed to stimulate the participation of women in this sport at all levels – national and international and also junior and U23 level which should be aimed at promoting women's rowing in general, and not only through regulatory qualification norms.

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