



WOMEN ATHLETES IN SPORTS MEDIA



Deliverable D2.1 – Output 1

Research methodology, production of national reports and the EU report

August 2025

ERASMUS-SPORT-2023-SCP
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Esportives de Catalunya



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“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”

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“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”



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Executive Summary

The underrepresentation of women in sports media remains one of the most persistent challenges to achieving gender equality in sport. Although the participation and performance of women athletes have grown significantly in recent decades, media coverage still tends to be limited, stereotyped, or focused on aspects unrelated to athletic performance. This imbalance impacts public perception, reinforces gender biases, and undermines progress towards more inclusive sporting cultures.

In this context, POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media was developed as a project funded by the Erasmus+ Sport programme, with the coordination of Athens Network of Collaborating Experts (ANCE) - Greece and the collaboration of institutions from Portugal, Spain, Italy and Bulgaria. The project aims to develop a shared methodology for collecting and analysing data on how female athletes are represented in sports media across different European countries, thereby contributing to a more consistent and evidence-based understanding of the issue.

This document presents POWER Work Package 2 and is structured accordingly. The first section introduces the project, its objectives, and scope. The second outlines the theoretical and methodological framework that guided the research. The third section presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the media coverage of women athletes, focusing specifically on digital media, television, and newspapers. In the fourth section, results from national focus groups with stakeholders such as athletes, journalists, and media professionals are discussed to provide a deeper understanding of perceptions and challenges. The data from all these phases are presented in national reports, which were subsequently consolidated in a cross-national report to offer a comprehensive overview of the representation of female athletes in the participating countries.

The findings confirm the persistence of structural inequalities in the visibility and framing of women athletes. They highlight the limited coverage, the frequent use of stereotypical narratives, and the need to adopt more inclusive and representative practices in sports journalism. The results support the implementation of policy recommendations, training programmes, and awareness-raising campaigns to promote gender equity in sport and media throughout Europe.



“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”

Introduction



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Introduction

The POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media project aims to contribute to the promotion of fair, unbiased, and non-stereotypical representations of women athletes in the media. Through research activities, development of guidelines, training sessions for journalists and media professionals, and awareness campaigns, the project seeks to promote a more inclusive and gender-equitable sports media landscape.

The project also aims to address existing gaps by producing practical tools such as training materials and national guidelines. These resources are designed to improve the capacity of media and sports professionals to challenge gender bias in their daily practice.

Project Background and Aims

Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment and opportunities individuals face based on gender. In sport, these inequalities are particularly pronounced, taking shape in pay disparities, limited access to resources, underrepresentation in leadership roles, and the persistence of gender stereotypes and sexism. Despite significant progress over the years, female athletes continue to receive less attention, less financial support, lower media visibility, and reduced promotion compared to their male counterparts.

Even when women athletes do gain media coverage, they often face biased representation that emphasises their appearance, age, or family background instead of their sporting performance. This pattern reinforces societal perceptions that downplay the value of women's achievements in sport. Additionally, women remain significantly underrepresented as professionals in sports media—as journalists, commentators, or editorial decision-makers. As UNESCO highlights, although access to sports broadcasting has increased, the actual presence of women in these roles remains disproportionately low across Europe.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping the public image of athletes and, by extension, reinforcing or challenging gender norms. When female athletes are marginalised or stereotyped in media content, the media not only reflects but also amplifies existing gender inequalities. Conversely, fair and balanced representation can transform social attitudes, inspire new generations, and promote more inclusive sporting environments.

Although international organisations such as the International Olympic Committee, UN Women, and the Council of Europe have already proposed guidelines to promote fair portrayals of women athletes in the media, their implementation remains inconsistent. Crucially, there is a widespread lack of recent, harmonised data on how female athletes are represented in traditional and digital media across EU countries. While statistics exist regarding women's participation in media production, few studies focus on how women athletes are depicted in the content itself.

By promoting fair representation, the project contributes to gender equality in sport in four essential ways:

- **Challenging stereotypes:** By showcasing athleticism, leadership, and competitiveness in women, media can counter traditional gender norms and encourage girls and women to participate in sport.
- **Providing role models:** Increased visibility of female athletes supports identification and aspiration among young audiences, especially girls.
- **Combating discrimination:** Fair and accurate media coverage helps dismantle systemic bias and fosters a more equitable sporting culture.
- **Stimulating investment:** Equal media attention can attract sponsorship and public engagement, contributing to the sustainable growth of women's sport.

The project aligns with key European policy documents, including the EU Work Plan for Sport (2021–2024) and the 2022 Recommendations from the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport. It directly contributes to the Erasmus+ priority of “Promoting equality and European values in and through sport,” with particular emphasis on gender equality.

To contextualise these goals and assess the current situation in each country, **a national-level diagnosis was conducted across the partners.** This analysis revealed structural and cultural patterns of gender inequality in the media coverage of female athletes. Though each country has its own national specificities, several shared challenges emerged:

- **Greece:** Media coverage tends to focus on personal traits of female athletes rather than performance. Women's sports receive significantly less funding and sponsorship.
- **Spain:** Female athletes are underrepresented in media coverage, and women remain a minority in coaching and leadership roles.
- **Bulgaria:** Media attention is focused on a few sports such as rhythmic gymnastics, while women's representation in sport governance remains low.
- **Hungary:** Successful female athletes receive increasing recognition, yet structural inequalities in funding and media visibility persist.
- **Portugal:** Despite increased female participation in sport, media coverage remains disproportionately low and focused on a few disciplines.
- **Italy:** Female athletes are marginalised in both traditional and digital media, and their representation in leadership and media roles remains limited.

These national overviews highlight **the need for harmonised data, tailored guidelines, and coordinated actions to address persistent inequalities.** The POWER project responds to these challenges with an integrated strategy for improving how female athletes are portrayed in the media, ultimately contributing to a more equitable sporting culture in Europe.

In this sense, the project has four main objectives:



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1. Analyse the current situation per country regarding how women athletes are portrayed in the press and media.
2. Develop a strategy alongside “gender equality in sports media” guidelines for journalists, media professionals, and staff of communication departments of sports organisations, associations/federations/co-federations, etc.
3. Train journalists, media professionals, journalism students, communication staff of sports organisations, bloggers, and content creators on adopting and implementing the guidelines to promote gender equality in sports media.
4. Raise awareness on the fair representation of women athletes and challenge the gender biases that exist in the sports industry.

Project Innovation

The POWER project stands out for its innovative approach to promoting gender equality by addressing a critical yet underexplored intersection: the portrayal of female athletes in sports media. While gender stereotypes in media are widely acknowledged, the specific mechanisms through which sports media contribute to the marginalisation of women remain insufficiently studied and tackled. POWER proposes a structured response to this issue, combining data collection, capacity-building, and awareness-raising with the aim of reshaping how female athletes are represented across Europe.

The project is innovative in three key points:

- **Focus on media representation in sport:** It shifts the focus from general gender issues to the specific role of the media in shaping how female athletes are seen by the public.
- **Inclusive approach:** It expands the target group beyond traditional journalists to include bloggers, social media creators, and communication professionals from sports organisations, recognising the blurred boundaries of modern media ecosystems.
- **Localised yet transferable results:** Outputs are tailored to national contexts (Greece, Portugal, Hungary, Bulgaria, Spain, and Italy) but designed to be scalable and applicable across EU Member States.

The POWER project is built on a collaborative and multidisciplinary partnership that brings together organisations with expertise in sports governance, media communication, gender equality, and research. This combination fosters mutual learning and knowledge exchange across national borders. The diversity of contexts ensures that the results will reflect not only shared patterns of inequality but also culturally specific challenges and opportunities.

The project also draws on and expands the impact of prior initiatives funded by the Erasmus+ programme and other EU frameworks. Notably:

- The Council of Europe’s “All In: Towards Gender Balance in Sport”, which offers a toolkit for integrating gender mainstreaming in sport.



- The “Where Are All Women?” project, which developed recommendations on media training to improve the visibility of women’s sport.
- “Leveraging Sport to Tackle Gender Inequalities”, which focused on training sport instructors in gender-sensitive practices.

Projects such as Sport for Gender Equality, Sport Power, Roller Rosa, and Pink Revolution, which addressed female participation, leadership, or visibility in various sports contexts. Initiatives under other programmes, such as “Promoting Gender Equality for a More Inclusive Society”, which focused more broadly on gender equality but included activities directly relevant to sports media. These projects provide a strong foundation for POWER to build upon, ensuring that the developed tools and methodologies do not duplicate, but rather enhance and complement existing efforts.

Despite such progress, the persistence of gendered portrayals, underrepresentation, and occasional sexualisation of women athletes in the media demonstrates the need for a more systematic, data-driven, and transnational approach. The POWER project directly addresses this gap by collecting recent and harmonised data, producing national and EU-wide reports, and delivering evidence-based training materials that respond to the needs of journalists, content creators, and sports communication professionals.

Furthermore, the project aligns with:

1. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, particularly the objective “Being free from violence and stereotypes.”
2. The EU Work Plan for Sport 2021–2024, which highlights the role of sport in promoting inclusion and equality.
3. The 2022 Recommendations of the High-Level Group on Gender Equality in Sport, which calls for enhanced visibility, leadership, and protection for women in sport.

Finally, POWER also addresses the social urgency underscored by recent revelations of gender-based violence in sports. For instance, in Greece, the national #MeToo movement was catalysed by a female Olympic athlete’s public denunciation of abuse—underscoring the need to challenge cultural silences and discriminatory representations that enable such dynamics. In this sense, POWER is both timely and necessary.

“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Partners



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Project Partners



Athens Network of Collaborating Experts

– **ANCE** (Greece): ANCE is a non-profit organisation with strong experience in EU-funded projects focusing on sustainable development, gender equality, and sports. It coordinates multiple Erasmus+ Sport projects, including initiatives that promote social inclusion through climbing, combat loneliness in older adults, and foster sustainable dietary habits among athletes. ANCE also supports the HeforShe campaign and leads a EuropeAid initiative on gender equality in Uzbekistan.

UFEC – Unió de Federacions Esportives de Catalunya (Spain): Representing 71 Catalan sports federations and around 12,500 clubs, UFEC is an influential sports body in Spain. It supports gender equality through training and awareness campaigns, such as the WESE programme and the International Women in Sports Congress. It enforces gender protocols and complaint mechanisms and celebrates women's achievements through events like the Women's Sport Festival and the GAP WOMEN Erasmus+ project.





Association Mundus Bulgaria – AMB (Bulgaria): AMB develops programmes to support social and professional inclusion, especially for young people and vulnerable groups. It promotes sports-based interventions, volunteering, and non-formal education through sport. AMB has implemented projects like FAMS (Fostering Female Management Leaders in Sports), VSPORT, and the VETSLAB platform, combining sport with digitalisation and virtual learning. AMB will manage WP4, developing the project's Open Education Resource platform.

Budapest Association for International Sports – BAIS (Hungary): BAIS promotes intercultural dialogue and participation through sport-based education. It develops inclusive activities and advocates for women's leadership in sport. Key initiatives include the LeaderSHE and OneGoal projects, aimed at empowering female athletes and increasing their presence in sports management and grassroots football clubs.





Sport Evolution Alliance – SEA (Portugal):

SEA is a private NGO specialising in sports management, project development, training, and consultancy. Based in Lisbon, it focuses on health, education, and cultural policies. SEA has led or participated in several EU projects and is a member of ISCA. With strong research and analytical capacity, SEA will contribute to the data collection, training, and policy analysis components of POWER.

Istituto Italiano dei Media – ISIDEM (Italy): ISIDEM conducts media research and promotes pluralism, democratic communication, and informed public discourse. Established in 2010, it monitors television pluralism, analyses the social and economic dimensions of media innovation, and facilitates dialogue through conferences and reports. ISIDEM's work supports critical analysis of how media portray women athletes and contributes to better-informed journalistic practices across the EU.



“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Method



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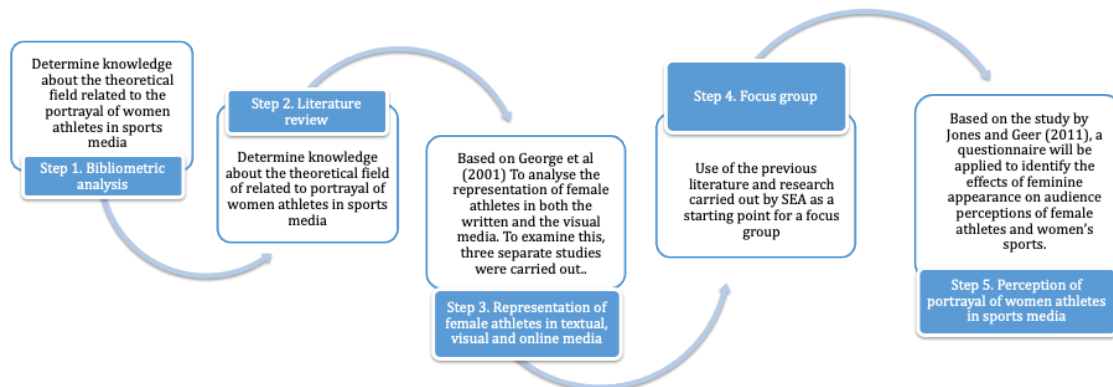
Aims to Research

An initial effort was made to ensure a robust theoretical and practical framework for this project, focusing on the impact of media representation on female athletes. The POWER consortium proposed the development of a comprehensive research process to better understand the portrayal of women in sports media and to produce tangible strategies and interventions. The methodology adopted involves five interrelated steps:

- **Bibliometric analysis and literature review:** The project began with a thorough review of existing academic publications focused on the representation of female athletes in media. This stage laid the theoretical foundation and identified key concepts, themes, and gaps in the current body of knowledge.
- **Media content analysis:** Each partner country performed a comparative analysis of media outputs, including press articles, TV, magazine content, and social media posts. A unified coding scheme ensured that national analyses contributed to an integrated European overview.
- **Focus groups:** Stakeholders—including athletes, journalists, communication professionals, and coaches—participated in guided focus group discussions to provide qualitative insights into media dynamics and gender portrayal in sport.
- **Audience survey:** Inspired by the work of Amy Jones and Geer (2011), a structured questionnaire was administered to audiences who follow women's sport. The goal was to assess how feminine appearance influences audience perceptions of female athletes, based on simulated news and image exposure.
- **National and EU Reports:** Each country produced a national report based on findings from the preceding stages. These reports were consolidated into a final European report, coordinated by SEA, presenting patterns, best practices, and tailored recommendations for promoting gender equality in sports media across Europe.

Through this structure, the POWER project not only built evidence but also equipped stakeholders with practical tools and knowledge to foster fair and inclusive media portrayals of women in sport.

Research Roadmap



Step 1 and 2: Bibliometric Analysis and Literature Review

This step aimed to determine knowledge about the theoretical field related to the portrayal of women athletes in sports media. A bibliometric analysis and literature review were conducted to evaluate the evolution of the topic, the most productive authors, countries, and institutions and identify trends in this research area (Abad-Segura et al., 2020).

The analysis considered variables such as the productivity of authors, countries, journals, and institutions, the number of articles published, citation counts, and key metrics like the H index and SJR impact factor of leading articles.

The process involved two main steps:

1. Select relevant keywords (e.g., “woman,” “sportswomen stereotype,” “media,” “sports media”) and analyse their usage over time.
2. Network mapping and co-occurrence analysis of keywords to reveal the academic field’s cognitive structure and research trends.

The results of this step provided a solid foundation for understanding the theoretical field and guided subsequent phases of the research.

Building on the bibliometric analysis, the literature review deepened the understanding of the theoretical field related to the portrayal of women athletes in sports media. By systematically analysing studies, this step identified key themes, gaps, and methodologies that inform the project’s focus and design. This review ensured that the research was grounded in existing knowledge while highlighting areas for further exploration.

Step 3: Representation of female athletes in textual, visual, and online media

Based on George et al. (2001), this step focused on analysing how female athletes are represented in written, visual, and online media. Three studies were conducted to examine

textual content, visual elements, and online media presence, highlighting patterns and disparities in coverage from this theoretical standpoint:

Category	Positive Media Presence	Negative Media Presence
Language	- Inclusive language - Respectful tone	- Assumed emotionalism - Success linked to appearance - Traditional gender roles - Questioning their “femininity” - Provocative language unrelated to sporting performance - Objectifying language that reduces the athlete(s) to her/their appearance - Inappropriate or unnecessary commentary on the body
Performance Coverage	- Achievements, - High performance, - Talent development - Highlighting talent development and skill(s) - Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	- Downplaying achievements - Framing them sensationally - Focus on failure(s) - Emphasis on injury(ies) or physical limitation(s) - Highlighting sanction(s) or disciplinary issue(s)
Personal Narratives	- Personal life, - Life lessons, - Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)	- Success linked to appearance - Traditional gender roles - Questioning their “femininity”
Representation of Women	- Emphasising leadership and positive presence - Breaking stereotypes - Highlighting role models	- Focus on appearance over ability - Inappropriate or unnecessary representation of the body - Posed, provocative representation unrelated to sport performance - Objectifying representation that reduces the athlete(s) to her/their appearance

In addition, this step aimed to analyse specific days that were carefully selected by the researchers to ensure a balanced distribution across both months and weekdays over the entire period (each partner will complete the Calendar Tasks Days Table). It was essential to avoid influencing or controlling the research outcomes. Otherwise, the research could lose its objectivity and risk reflecting preconceived assumptions.

The analysis was not focus solely on specific press articles but on the entirety of the newspapers published on the selected days, as well as the full content of the online magazine, all X posts from the selected day, and the complete TV programme. This required a thorough review of all content and comprehensive reporting of the findings. In cases where paper editions were unavailable for past issues, their PDF versions were used as references, along with recordings for the TV programmes.

This analysis investigated factors such as:

- Frequency and prominence of media coverage
- Themes and narratives surrounding female athletes
- Visual framing and stereotyping in images and videos

This analysis included data collection from reports published between 1st June 2024 and 28th February 2025, covering the critical period leading up to the Olympic Games, balanced in months and weekdays throughout this period.

Newspaper and Online Sport Magazine data collection

Each partner analysed:

- Weekday of the data collection and publication
- Gender associated with the headlines
- Number of pictures and their size
- Language and image categories (e.g. gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
- Type of sports
- Journalist gender

X data collection

Each partner analysed:

- Publications from 2 prominent media profiles (high prestige and number of followers, 1 general media channel, 1 sports-specific media channels)
- Type of profile
- Number of profile followers
- Language and image categories (e.g., gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
- Context of visual content (sports-related or other)

TV Episode data collection

Each partner analysed:

- 2 general TV channels news programmes or the most prominent TV news programme. News available online.
- Type of programme
- Exposition time
- Language and image categories (e.g., gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
- Context of visual content (sports-related or other)

Step 4: Focus Group



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As part of the POWER project's mixed-method approach, focus groups were conducted across all participating countries to explore perceptions, causes, and consequences related to the portrayal of women athletes in sports media. This qualitative method allowed for the collection of rich, nuanced insights that would be difficult to obtain through observation or structured questionnaires alone (Freitas et al., 1998).

The focus group technique was particularly valuable due to its intersubjective and dialogical nature, enabling participants to build upon each other's perspectives. This dynamic facilitated the emergence of themes and reflections not only on personal experiences but also on shared cultural and professional contexts. Although spontaneity can be partially constrained in a group setting, the moderated discussions succeeded in generating authentic and critical dialogue on the systemic issues faced by female athletes in the media landscape.

Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and followed a semi-structured discussion guide that ensured comparability across countries while allowing flexibility for national specificities to emerge. Participants included athletes, coaches, sports journalists, media professionals, and communication staff from sports organisations were selected to ensure diversity of roles and gender perspectives.

Main Objectives of the Focus Groups

- To reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in traditional and digital sports media.
- To discuss the underlying causes of gender inequity in media coverage.
- To identify perceived consequences of this representation on athletes' careers and public perception.
- To inform the development of training materials and national strategies within the POWER project.

The sessions were conducted either in person or online, depending on local conditions and participant availability. Participation was entirely voluntary and carried out under strict ethical guidelines, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. Audio recording was used only when authorised by all participants.

Importantly, the development of the focus group guide was grounded in the literature on gender representation in sports media. Based on the key findings and conceptual frameworks reviewed during the bibliometric and literature review phase, a set of a priori analytical categories was established. These categories informed both the structuring of the discussion and the coding of the collected data. The guiding questions and thematic categories are presented in the table below, providing the foundation for all national discussions conducted in this phase of the project.

Category	Mandatory question	Alternative question
Inequality in Media Coverage	- What do you think could be done to increase the amount of media coverage dedicated to women in sports? - Which women's sports do you think receive more or less coverage? Why?	- What do you think could be done to increase the amount of media coverage dedicated to women in sports? - Do you believe the lack of coverage impacts public perception of the value of women's achievements in sports?
Stereotypes and Sexualisation	- Do you think the public expects to see female athletes in a specific way? If so, how does this influence how the media portrays them?	- Have you noticed sexualized representations of female athletes in the media? How do you think this affects public and athlete perceptions? - In your opinion, is there a difference in how the media addresses the physical appearance of female athletes compared to male athletes? How should this change?
Lack of Focus on Performance	- Why do you think the media focuses more on personal or superficial aspects of female athletes rather than their skills and athletic performance?	- Do you believe athletes should have more control over the narratives of their own stories? What tools or platforms could help in this process?
Impact on athletes' careers	- What would be the impact of greater visibility of women's sports achievements in inspiring future generations?	- Do you think the way the media covers women in sports directly affects their chances of securing sponsorships and financial support? - What kind of support do you think would be necessary to help female athletes build more sustainable careers?
Sexist and gendered stereotypes	- Do you believe the media is changing for the better regarding reducing gender stereotypes? What still needs improvement?	- What examples of stereotype-based representations have you seen in sports media? - How can media and communication professionals/students be educated to avoid sexist or stereotypical representations?

Need for Change	- What examples of good practices in representing women in sports have you seen in the media? What can we learn from them?	
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Step 5. Perception of the portrayal of women's athletes in sports media

Finally, a quantitative experimental study was conducted to investigate how different portrayals of female athletes influence audience perceptions. This step builds upon the findings of the literature review and focus groups, offering a complementary and controlled analysis of how gendered imagery affects media reception and attitudes toward female athletes and women's sport.

The design of the study was inspired by the research of Amy Jones and Greer (2011), who examined how stereotypically feminine appearances in sports media impact audience evaluations. The POWER project adapts this framework to a European, multi-country context, using a standardised questionnaire and visual stimuli distributed across all partner nations.

General Objective

To examine how audience perceptions of female athletes are shaped by the type of sport and the visual portrayal of the athlete in a news article.

Study Design and Procedure

The experimental procedure involved the random assignment of participants to one of four fictional media scenarios. Each scenario featured a 200-word sports article describing an athlete being named "Top Defensive Player" in her sport by a regional sports association. These articles varied along two key dimensions:

- Sport type: Football (traditionally male-coded) vs Volleyball (traditionally female-coded)
- Athlete appearance: Stereotypically feminine vs. a more masculine athletic portrayal

The visual manipulation included photography reflecting these dimensions. Feminine portrayals featured slim athletes in sexualised poses or attire, with soft facial expressions and light muscle tone. In contrast, masculine portrayals included athletes with visibly muscular builds, athletic gear, assertive postures, and neutral or masculine-coded facial features.

This 2x2 factorial design (appearance × sport) allows the project to test not only individual effects but also possible interaction effects between the visual representation of the athlete and the perceived gender-coding of the sport.

Each participant was exposed to one of the four conditions and then completed a structured questionnaire measuring emotional engagement with the article, interest in the sport, and the extent to which they perceived the sport as gender-typed.

Participants

Participants were recruited among sports fans, primarily those who regularly follow women's sports, such as volleyball or football. Each partner country aimed to collect responses, ensuring a balanced sample for cross-national comparison.

Measurement Instruments

Participants responded to the following validated scales:

- Interest in the Article: Measured using the Emotional Quotient Scale (EQ) by Wells (1964), consisting of 12 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale.
- Interest in the Sport: Measured using the Sports Involvement Scale (SIS) by Ko et al. (2008), comprising 8 semantic differential items scored from 1 (low involvement) to 7 (high involvement).
- Gender Stereotyping of the Sport: Measured using the Gender Stereotypes in Sport Scale by Jones and Greer (2011), including 4 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Hypotheses

- H1: A more stereotypically feminine visual portrayal of a female athlete will increase audience interest in the article.
- H2: A more stereotypically feminine portrayal will increase interest in the sport itself.
- H3: Presenting a female athlete in a non-stereotypical sport context will reduce gender-typing of that sport among audience members.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in several steps:

1. Internal Consistency – Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale and for each country, as well as for the combined dataset. Reverse-coded items were inverted prior to calculation.
2. Measurement Invariance Testing – To ensure that the scales were comparable across the six participating countries, a stepwise multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in Jamovi software (v.2.6.2):
 - Configural invariance – baseline model with no constraints, testing whether the same factor structure was valid across groups.
 - Metric invariance – factor loadings constrained to equality across groups, testing whether the constructs had the same meaning in all countries.

- Scalar invariance (factor loadings and intercepts constrained equal across groups)

Model fit was assessed using CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR. Invariance was accepted if $\Delta\text{CFI} \leq 0.01$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.015$.

3. Final Dataset – Only after establishing scalar invariance were country comparisons performed, ensuring that differences in scores reflected genuine differences in perceptions rather than measurement artefacts.

After that, the responses were analysed using Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) to evaluate the effects of the independent variables (athlete appearance and sport type) on the three dependent variables simultaneously. This statistical model allows for the control of potential covariates and the assessment of main and interaction effects within one comprehensive framework.

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**“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Bibliometric analysis and Literature review**



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A bibliometric analysis of women athletes in sports media

Abstract

This systematic review examines the academic production on the representation of women athletes in sports media over the last decade (2015–2025), focusing on thematic patterns, bibliometric trends, and collaboration networks. Guided by PRISMA methodology, the study retrieved 2,773 records from Web of Science and Scopus, resulting in 104 eligible publications after screening. Thematic analysis identified four dominant categories: (1) sexualisation and objectification, (2) visibility and gender equity, (3) social barriers, and (4) physiological narratives. Findings reveal persistent disparities in coverage, with female athletes often underrepresented or framed through stereotypes emphasising appearance, personal life, or emotion rather than athletic performance. While digital platforms have enabled self-representation, they frequently replicate legacy media biases. Bibliometric results show a concentration of high-impact authors, journals, and institutions in the Global North, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, with limited integration of voices from the Global South. Thematic dominance of sexualisation and equity reflects enduring structural inequalities, while growing attention to social and physiological aspects signals a gradual diversification of research agendas. Collaboration patterns display fragmented networks, suggesting potential for stronger cross-regional and interdisciplinary engagement. The study underscores the need for more inclusive, culturally diverse and contextually sensitive research to challenge entrenched stereotypes and promote equitable representation. Limitations include reliance on two databases and a ten-year window, which may exclude relevant studies. Future work should expand geographic scope, strengthen collaborative ties, and integrate emerging perspectives to advance the global understanding of gendered media narratives in sport.

Keywords: *Female athletes; Sports media; Gender stereotypes; Sexualisation; Media representation*

Introduction

Female athletes continue to compete not only against their opponents but also against the structural shadows that obscure their presence within the global sports arena. Beyond the physical and psychological demands inherent in high-performance sport, women must navigate sociocultural barriers, gender stereotypes, and systemic inequalities that shape their careers and public perception. Within this complex and uneven playing field, media coverage emerges as a powerful tool capable of constructing or distorting narratives, often determining whose achievements are recognised and whose remain marginalised (Hasaan et al., 2016).

Sports media play a dual role: not only in disseminating results and performances but also in shaping public discourse regarding who and what matters in sport. Despite incremental progress, women athletes are frequently underrepresented or portrayed superficially, with disproportionate attention given to appearance, personal life, or emotions, rather than athletic merit (Billings & Young, 2015; Smith & Bissell, 2014). Such practices reinforce a male-dominated symbolic order, where women's achievements are trivialised or overlooked (Kane, 2013; Kane et al., 2013; Symons et al., 2022). While global events such as the Olympic Games have shown marginal improvements in visibility (Sherwood et al., 2017), these moments remain the exception rather than the norm.

This misrepresentation has tangible economic and structural consequences. Reduced visibility directly affects sponsorship opportunities, professional recognition, and long-term career prospects (Burki et al., 2022). Despite growing interest in women's sport and some signs of positive change, structural barriers remain deeply rooted. Gender stereotype theory offers a basis for more inclusive communication and marketing strategies, fostering a shift towards gender-equitable representation (Billings & Young, 2015; Burke, 2022; Kane, 2013; Sherry et al., 2024; Sherwood et al., 2017; Smith & Bissell, 2014; Symons et al., 2022).

It is therefore urgent to promote media practices that foreground sporting performance and reflect the diversity of female athletes. This systematic review aims to contribute to the academic debate by critically examining how women are portrayed in sports media, and identifying gaps, patterns, and emerging directions. This objective is supported by the following research questions:

- RQ1: What is the recent trajectory of academic publications on the representation of women athletes in sports media?
- RQ2: Which topics and publications have had the greatest impact in this field?
- RQ3: Who are the most prolific authors, journals, institutions and countries in this area, and what are the characteristics of their collaboration networks?

Background

There is a clear quantitative and qualitative imbalance in how women athletes are represented in the media. Not only do they receive less screen time, but the tone and framing of coverage often reinforce gender bias (Bruce, 2013). When women are featured, the focus frequently

shifts towards physical appearance, clothing, or personal matters, rather than athletic skill or performance (Bruce & Hardin, 2014; Cooky et al., 2013; LaVoi & Calhoun, 2014; Lobpries et al., 2018). These portrayals contribute to the objectification and stereotyping of female athletes, perpetuating secondary or hyper-feminised roles (Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018; Villalon & Weiller-Abels, 2020).

Such framing has deep repercussions beyond public perception. It also affects athletes' self-perception and identity. Some respond strategically by adopting self-sexualisation tactics on social media to enhance visibility (Geurin, 2017). This creates a feedback loop that normalises stereotypes, symbolically undermines female sporting achievement, and narrows the spectrum of representation (Kane et al., 2013; Sheffer, 2020).

Historical analyses show that this pattern emerged early, particularly in the United States during the 1980s, when media began to trivialise female performance through comments on appearance or attire (Salido-Fernández & Muñoz-Muñoz, 2021). Despite some resistance, these representations have become naturalised across television, print, and radio coverage (Caple et al., 2011; Cooky et al., 2013).

The digital age has brought both promise and challenge. Social media offers new spaces for athletes to author their own narratives and subvert traditional portrayals (Sheffer, 2020; Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2018). Yet, legacy media patterns persist, with digital platforms often replicating the same stereotypes seen in print and broadcast media (Johnson et al., 2020; Lichfield & Kavanagh, 2019).

That said, signs of gradual change appear most prominently during mega-events, when visibility tends to improve (Bruce, 2013; Burke, 2022; Pegoraro et al., 2018; Smith & Bissell, 2014). Still, structural inequalities remain entrenched (Burki et al., 2022; Salido-Fernández & Muñoz-Muñoz, 2021), limiting access to sponsorship and professional opportunities for female athletes.

This evolving media landscape necessitates a systematic review and critical mapping of recent academic contributions. It is essential to examine the interplay between traditional and digital platforms and to assess their role in either sustaining or challenging inequality.

Method

Bibliometric and database analysis

This systematic review was designed to identify and analyse academic production on the representation of women athletes in sports media over the past decade. The approach was structured in line with PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), ensuring transparency and rigour in the search, selection, and analysis procedures. The PRISMA checklist, comprising 27 items, helped to structure the review and validate each step of the process.

Database selection and search strategy



Data were retrieved from two leading academic databases, Web of Science and Scopus, due to their relevance in the fields of social sciences and sports studies. The search strategy focused on three core components: population (women athletes), Phenomenon (media), and context (sport). Boolean operators were used to structure the search as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Search term combinations

Group	Keywords
Population	"woman" OR "woman sport" OR "women" OR "sportswomen" OR "sportswomen image" OR "sportswomen stereotype"
AND	
Phenomenon	"Sportswomen stereotype" OR "media" OR "newspaper" OR "sports media"
AND	
Context	Sports OR Sport

Each group was connected using the Boolean operator "AND", while synonyms within each group were linked using "OR". The timeframe was limited to the past ten years (2015–2025) to capture recent developments in the media landscape. Eligible publications included original research articles, reviews, and empirical studies from indexed journals, with no restrictions regarding publication language.

Selection process and eligibility criteria

A total of **2,773 records were initially retrieved** and imported into Rayyan software (Ouzzani et al., 2016), which facilitated organisation, duplicate detection, and inclusion/exclusion tracking. Screening was conducted in a double-blind process by two independent reviewers with expertise in sports management.

Studies were deemed eligible if they directly addressed the media representation of women athletes, regardless of the sport modality. Exclusions were made for off-topic publications, conference abstracts, or proceedings. After removing duplicates and non-relevant formats, 1,502 records remained. These underwent title and abstract screening to identify studies eligible for full-text review. Ultimately, 137 studies were read in full, of which 33 were excluded for lack of relevance, resulting in 104 final inclusions (see Figure 1 for the PRISMA flowchart).

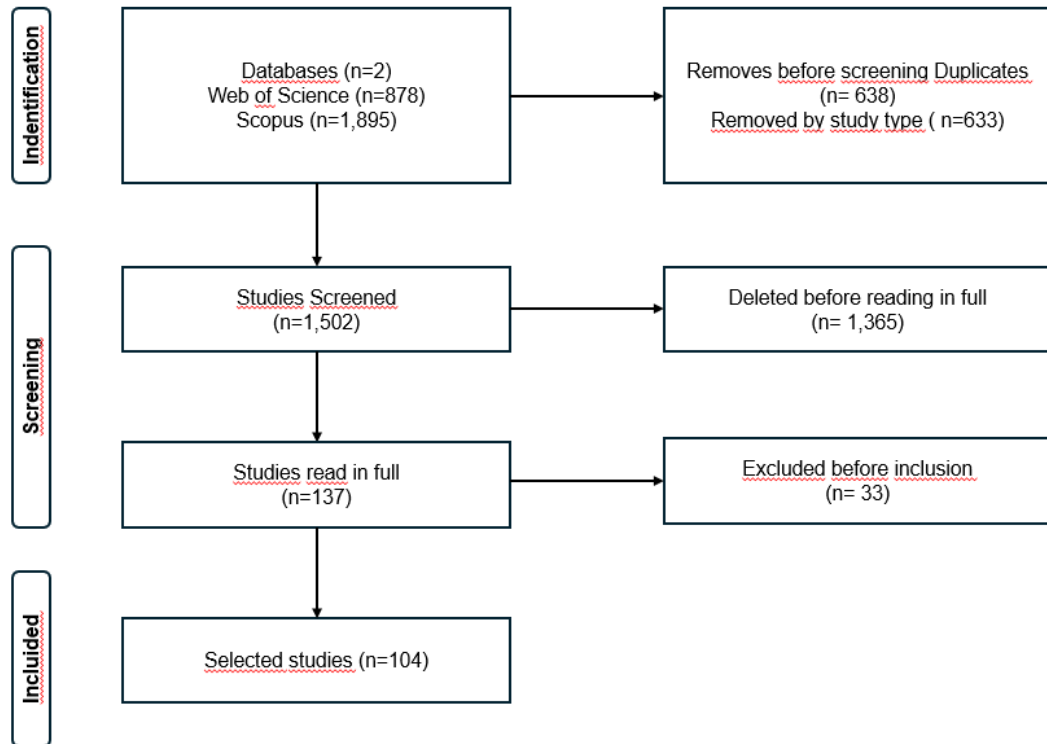


Figure 1 Bibliometric analysis procedure

Data analysis and thematic categorisation

The 104 studies included in the review were systematically coded in Excel based on author(s), year, country, journal, objectives, and findings. Thematic analysis resulted in four emergent categories:

- T1. The female athlete: biological narratives in media
- T2. Visibility and gender equity in sports media coverage
- T3. Social barriers faced by female athletes
- T4. Sexualisation and objectification in media portrayals

These categories were developed through iterative reading of titles, abstracts, and full texts. Frequencies and distributions were reviewed and tabulated to support the analysis (see Table 2). Relational bibliometric analysis was also conducted using VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) to explore co-authorship networks and keyword relationships.

Table 2 Frequency and distribution of articles in relation to year, category

Year	T1	T2	T3	T4	TP
2015		5		1	6
2016	2	4	2	2	10
2017		5		1	6
2018	2	5		2	9
2019	1	8	1	2	12
2020	2	7	1		10
2021		7		1	8
2022	1	8	3	3	15
2023	1	9	3	1	14
2024	2	4	4	4	14
TOTAL	11	62	14	17	104

(T1): The female athlete: biological narratives in media; (T2): Visibility and gender equity in sports media coverage; (T3): Social barriers faced by female athletes; (T4): Sexualisation and objectification in media portrayals.

Production about the representation of women as athletes in the media is a topic that is still being addressed and with greater dedication to explore other ramifications of the context, not just the point of equity. It was understood as necessary, from an academic point of view, to investigate which points are limiting the equity in the coverage and representation of women's sports when compared to men's sports, which may explain the high productive demand on the subject (62 studies in the last 10 years). Among the themes that touch on representation without considering the terms of equality of visibility or exposure, it is possible to highlight a growing portrayal of women having to deal with social issues raised in relation to their practice, as well as the aspects of sexualisation of the image of women.

This increase in academic production over the last decade—evidenced by the increasing annual frequency of publications—reflects not only a continued concern with gender equity in sports media, but also an expansion of the debate to other dimensions of female representation, such as social issues and the sexualisation of the athlete's image. Table 3 deepens this analysis by presenting fundamental bibliometric characteristics of the identified scientific production. By observing variables such as the total number of publications, the authors involved, the guidelines and the media of the article's authors, it is possible to perceive a progressive maturation in the area, with greater collaboration between researchers and growth in the visibility of studies, especially in the most recent cycles. In addition, the number of journals identified reinforces the consolidation of editorial spaces that have been specializing in this topic, conferring legitimacy and continuity to the scientific debate on the representation of female athletes in sports media.

Table 3 Main characteristics of scientific production on the representation of female athletes in

Year	TP	NA	Countries	TC	Sources	C/P	A/P
2015-2016	16	34	7	630	11	39.38	2.12
2017-2018	15	29	8	441	8	29.40	1.93
2019-2020	22	54	11	485	16	22.05	2.45
2021-2022	23	47	8	170	16	7.39	2.04
2023-2024	28	50	16	86	17	3.07	1.78

(TP): total of publications; (NA): number of authors; (TC): total citations; (C/P): average citations per publication; (A/P): average number of authors per publication.

The biennial analysis of publications reflects a growing plurality of authors who have been focusing on the theme of the representation of female athletes in sports media. The number of countries involved doubled in the last two years (2023–2024) compared to the data from 2015–2016, indicating a deepening of the investigative culture in different geographic contexts regarding the way in which the female body is represented. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of publications and scientific sources that host these discussions, which reinforces the strengthening and diversification of the field.

Although the average number of citations per publication has decreased in the most recent two years — something expected due to the shorter exposure time of the publications — older studies continue to be widely referenced, which lends robustness to the accumulated theoretical body. The average number of authors per article has remained relatively stable over the years, signalling a consolidation of the collaborative practice among researchers in the field.

Therefore, it is pertinent to highlight which studies have been most cited in this section (Table 4), considering their relevance for the consolidation and development of the scientific discussion on the representation of female athletes in the sports media.

Table 4 The 20 most productive documents are based on the number of citations

TC	Year	Title	Authors	Source	C/Y
285	2015	It's Dude Time!: A Quarter Century of Excluding Women's Sports in Televised News and Highlight Shows	Cooky, Cheryl; Messner, Michael A; Musto, Michela	COMMUNICATION & SPORT	28,5
113	2017	"From Fizzle to Sizzle!" Televised Sports News and the Production of Gender-Bland Sexism	Musto, Michela; Cooky, Cheryl; Messner, Michael A	Gender and Society	14,1
90	2019	A New Age for Media Coverage of Women's Sport? An Analysis of English Media Coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup	Petty, Kate; Pope, Stacey	SOCIOLOGY-THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION	15,0

86	2019	Re-establishing the 'outsiders': English press coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup	Black, Jack;Fielding-Lloyd, Beth	INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT	14,3
78	2016	'French football needs more women like Adriana'? Examining the media coverage of France's women's national football team for the 2011 World Cup and the 2012 Olympic Games	Ravel, Barbara; Gareau, Marc	INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT	8,7
51	2017	Newswork, News Values, and Audience Considerations: Factors That Facilitate Media Coverage of Women's Sports	Sherwood, Merryn; Osborne, Angela;Nicholson, Matthew;Sherry, Emma	COMMUNICATION & SPORT	6,4
51	2018	#SheBelieves: the use of Instagram to frame the US Women's Soccer Team during #FIFAWWC	Pegoraro, Ann;Comeau, Gina S; Frederick, Evan L	SPORT IN SOCIETY	7,3
50	2020	The Ball Game Is for the Boys: The Visual Framing of Female Athletes on National Sports Networks' Instagram Accounts	Romney, Miles; Johnson, Rich G	COMMUNICATION & SPORT	10,0
45	2018	When Women Fail to Hold Up More Than Half the Sky: Gendered Frames of CCTV's Coverage of Gymnastics at the 2016 Summer Olympics	Xu, Qingru; Billings, Andrew;Fan, Minghui	COMMUNICATION & SPORT	6,4
39	2016	The Women's Olympics? A Gender Analysis of NBC's Coverage of the 2012 London Summer Games	Coche, Roxane; Tuggle, CA	Electronic News	4,3
39	2019	Twitter, Team GB and the Australian Olympic Team: representations of gender in social media spaces	Litchfield, Chelsea;Kavanagh, Emma	SPORT IN SOCIETY	6,5
35	2015	THE INVISIBLE WOMAN? A comparative study of women's sports coverage in the UK national press before and after the 2012 Olympic Games	O'Neill, Deirdre;Mulready, Matt	JOURNALISM PRACTICE	3,5
30	2017	An Examination of Women's Sports Coverage on the Twitter Accounts of Local Television Sports Broadcasters	Hull, Kevin	COMMUNICATION & SPORT	3,8
29	2018	Smiling assassins, brides-to-be and super mums: the importance of gender and celebrity in media framing of female athletes at the 2016 Olympic Games	Dashper, Katherine	SPORT IN SOCIETY	4,1
29	2019	'Battle of the sixes': Investigating print media representations of female professional golfers competing in a men's tour event	Bowes, Ali; Kitching, Niamh	INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FOR THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPORT	4,8

28	2016	The dwindling Winter Olympic divide between male and female athletes: the NBC broadcast network's primetime coverage of the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games	MacArthur, Paul J; Angelini, James R; Billings, Andrew C; Smith, Lauren Reichart	SPORT IN SOCIETY	3,1
28	2022	Victory on Their Own Terms: American Front-Page Framing of the USWNT Repeat World Cup Championship	Bell, Travis R; Coche, Roxane	JOURNALISM PRACTICE	9,3
27	2018	NBC's televised media portrayal of female athletes in the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic Games: a critical feminist view	Villalon, Christina; Weiller-Abels, Karen	SPORT IN SOCIETY	3,9
23	2015	The Amount of Women's Sports Coverage on International Sports News Websites' Home Pages: Content Analysis of the Top Two Sites From Canada, France, Great Britain, and the United States	Coche, Roxane	Electronic News	2,3
22	2020	Gender Differences in Sports News Coverage on Twitter	Sainz-de-Baranda, Clara; Ada-Lameiras, Alba; Blanco-Ruiz, Marian	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND PUBLIC HEALTH	4,4

(TC): total citations; (C/Y): average total citations per year of publication.

Among the productions analysed, it is observed that the most cited studies are concentrated between the years 2015 and 2020, with emphasis on an article published in 2015 that gathers 285 citations, demonstrating a strong repercussion in recent literature. Although previous investigations have already contributed significantly to the theoretical construction on the representation of the female athlete, the works from this period stand out for consolidating debates and methodologies that began to influence new studies. The frequency with which articles from 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 appear among the most cited suggests that this period was especially productive, both in terms of visibility and academic impact. These studies helped to organize key themes and establish references that today support an important part of the research agenda in the area.

In addition to the absolute number of citations, the average number of citations per year of publication (average total citations per year) allows us to observe which studies remain relevant over time, not only due to their accumulated volume, but also due to their consistency as a reference in current debates. This metric helps to highlight the permanence and dynamism of certain contributions, especially those that continue to be cited even years after their publication. Based on this panorama of impact, it is equally important to understand who the authors are most involved in the construction of this field of knowledge, as well as the

frequency with which they have contributed to the advancement of the discussion on the representation of female athletes in the sports media (Table 5).

Table 5 The most productive authors as measured by the number of publications

Authors	TP	TC	TC/P	Institution	Country	NAY	
						1st P	LP
Billings, A.C.	6	102	17	University of Alabama	Unites States	2016	2024
Coche, R.	6	140	23.3	State University System of Florida	United States	2015	2022
Antunovic, D.	5	47	9.4	University of Minnesota System	United States	2016	2023
Smith, L.R.	4	67	16.8	Indiana University System	United States	2016	2020
Xu, Q.	4	76	19	Eastern Washington University	United States	2018	2021
Jakubowska, H.	4	44	11	Adam Mickiewicz University	Poland	2016	2022
MacArthur, P.J.	3	46	15.3	Indiana University Bloomington	United States	2016	2020
Ada-Lameiras, A.	3	33	11	Universidad Carlos III de Madrid	Spain	2020	2023
Cooky, C.	4	418	104.5	Purdue University System	United States	2015	2021

(TP): total of publications; (TC): total citations; (TC/P): average citations per publication; (NAY): number of active years of publication; (1st P): year for the first publication in the research line; (LP): year for the last publication in the research line.

The recurrence of certain names in scientific production on the representation of female athletes in sports media indicates not only an individual dedication to the topic but also points to the presence of consolidated research centres. In this sense, it is essential to observe which teaching and research institutions have concentrated this investigative effort. Below are the affiliations that have contributed the most to studies in the area (Table 6), which allows us to map the academic centres most engaged in the discussion and identify possible centres of excellence and scientific leadership in this field.

Table 6 The ten affiliations with the most productions on the representation of female athletes

Institution	Country	TP	TC	TC/P
University of Alabama System	United States	7	121	17,29
University of Alabama Tuscaloosa	United States	6	76	12,67
University System of Florida	United States	4	61	15,25
Durham University	United Kingdom	3	121	40,33
University of Memphis	United States	3	76	25,33
Indiana University Bloomington	United States	3	46	15,33
Indiana University System	United States	3	46	15,33
University of Delaware	United States	3	46	15,33
Griffith University	Australia	3	34	11,33
University of Granada	Spain	3	14	4,67

(TP): total of publications; (TC): total citations; (TC/P): average citations per publication

An analysis of the most productive institutional affiliations reveals a strong presence of North American universities, such as the University of Alabama System and the University System of Florida, which stand out not only for the volume of publications but also for the average impact of citations per study. Institutions in other countries, such as Durham University (United Kingdom), also demonstrate a high rate of citations per article, indicating the relevance and international impact of their contributions. These data reinforce that the production on the representation of female athletes in the sports media is anchored in centres of excellence, often associated with broader and more collaborative research networks.

Relational Bibliometric Analysis

To deepen the understanding of the structure of scientific production in the field of representation of female athletes in sports media, this section presents a relational bibliometric analysis carried out with the support of the VOSviewer software. The approach allowed mapping co-authorship networks between authors, collaboration patterns between institutions and countries, as well as the co-occurrence of keywords in the selected studies. From this visualization, it was possible to identify the main thematic groups, the most recurrent concepts and the most influential authors, offering an integrated perspective of the academic articulations and research trends in this domain.

The first visualization (Figure 2) presents the authors with the highest incidence in the proven database. Note the formation of some productive centres, with emphasis on researchers who have established themselves as references in the area. The density of nodes and direct connections indicate a production structure that, although divergent, is still relatively specific

around some names. The visualization also reveals thematic groupings, presenting different lines of research in development, which reinforces the idea of specialization within the field.

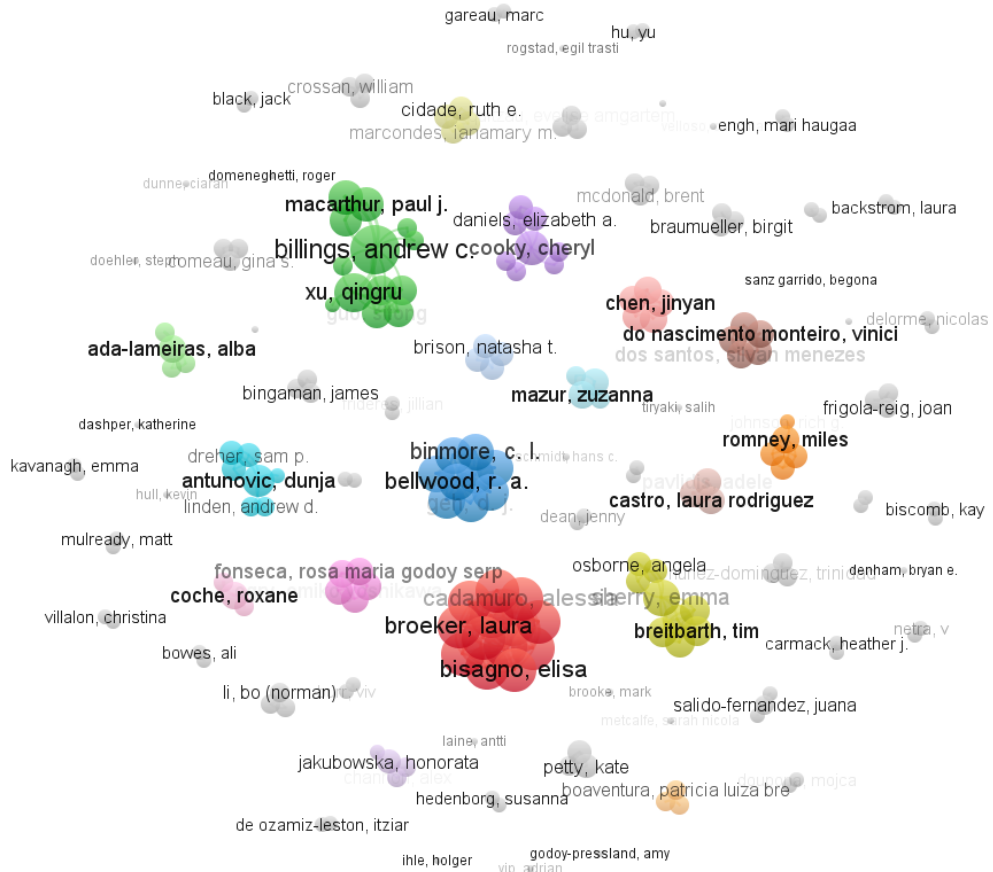


Figure 2 Authorship map of articles about female athletes represented in the media

In addition, the map of co-authorship (Figure 3) between authors reveals already established collaboration networks, although some are still poorly integrated. The presence of relatively isolated clusters shows that there are research centers operating in parallel, with consistent internal connections, but with weak intergroup articulation. This may signal an opportunity to strengthen transversal collaborations between different theoretical currents, methodological approaches and institutional contexts.

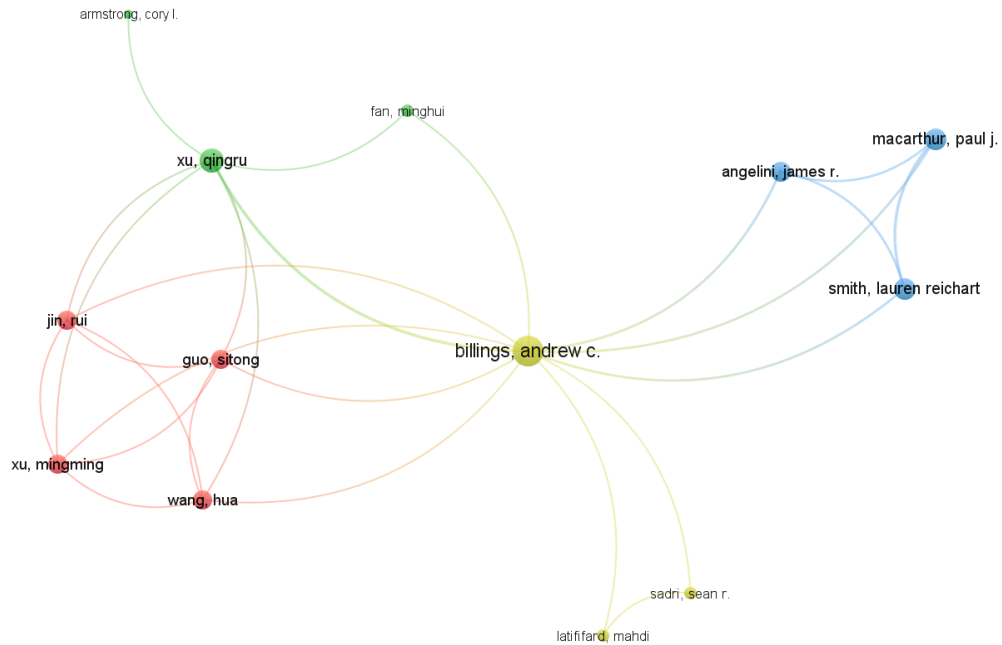


Figure 3 Co-authorship map between authors

The analysis of institutional affiliations (Figure 4) reveals a similar pattern: a limited number of universities appear as centres of production, with emphasis on North American, British and Australian institutions. Some universities demonstrate multiple connections with other institutions, indicating active involvement in international research networks. However, the visualization suggests that there is still a concentration of production in localized hubs, with potential for broader collaborative expansion.

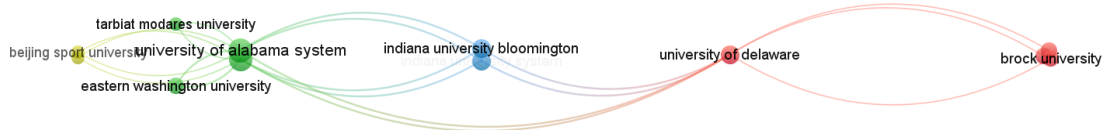


Figure 4 Collaboration between affiliations/institutions

Figure 5 shows the geographic distribution of scientific production, revealing that countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia concentrate most researchers and collaborations. The predominance of English-speaking countries suggests a hegemony of Western discourse in the construction of the scientific narrative on the representation of female athletes, which may limit the cultural diversity of the frameworks. The low presence of countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia points to the need to expand the inclusion of less represented geographic contexts, which may offer distinct and relevant perspectives.

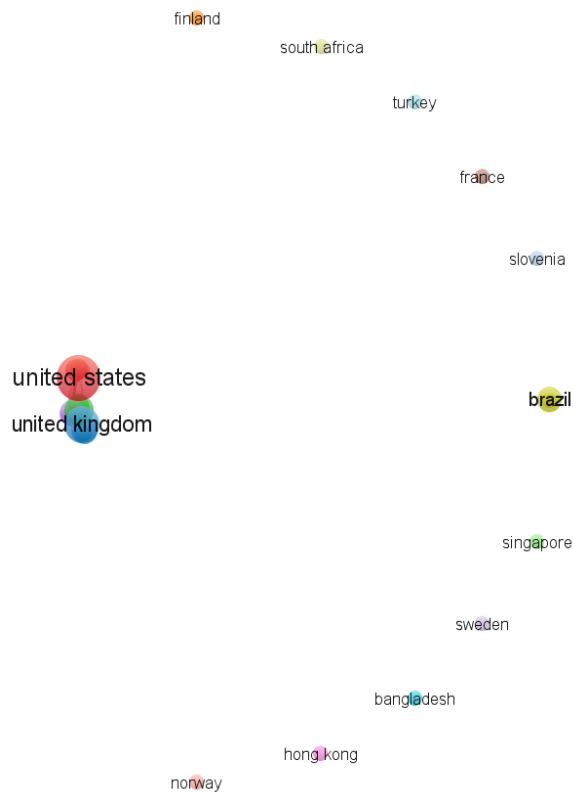


Figure 5 Distribution map of countries of affiliations/institutions

The distribution by country (Figure 6), in turn, reinforces this pattern. The United States appears as the main hub of articulation, directly connecting with a series of other countries, such as Canada, Iran, Croatia and the Czech Republic. The United Kingdom forms a second core of relevance, linked to countries such as Ireland, Australia, Spain and Germany.

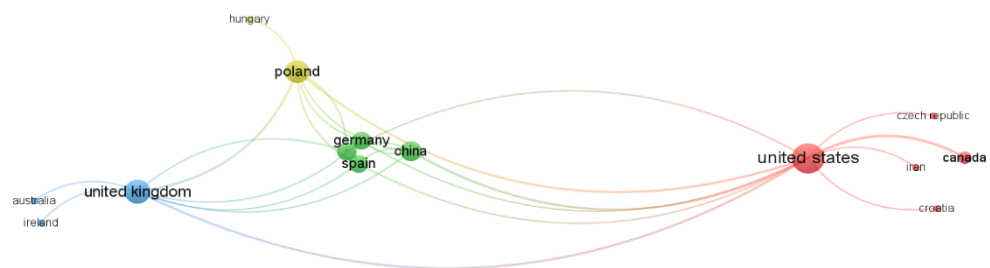


Figure 6 Country collaboration map

Countries such as China, Poland and Germany occupy an intermediate position, acting as bridges between the two large hubs. The absence of Latin American, African and most Asian countries highlights an imbalance in geographic representation, which limits the cultural and political diversity of scientific production on the subject.

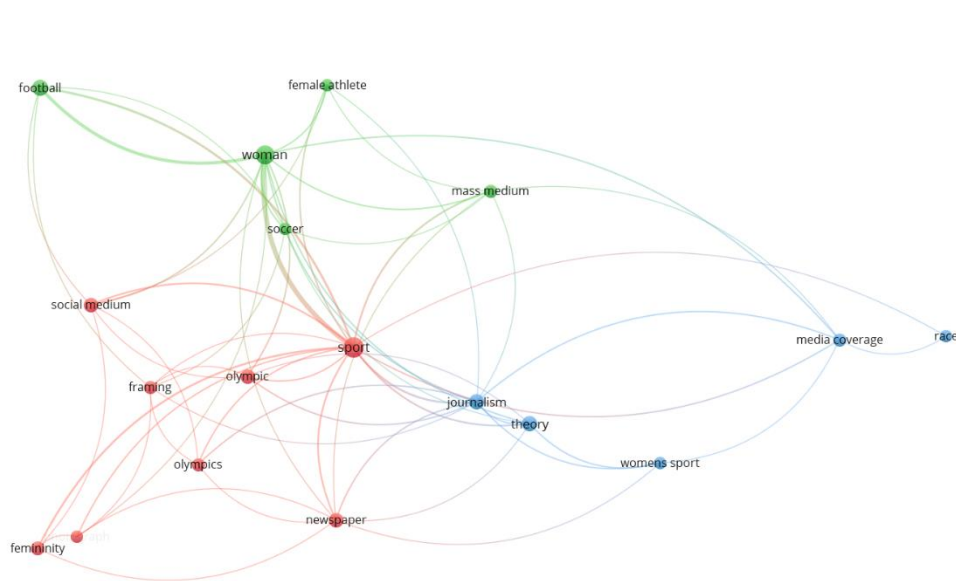


Figure 7 Keywords found in studies and relationship map

Regarding the analysis by keywords (Figure 7), the generated figure allows us to visualize the main concepts mobilized in the research. Terms such as gender, media, representation, female athletes and sexualisation appear as central, revealing the conceptual core that anchors the literature on the subject. The co-occurrence of the terms suggests a cohesive field, where debates on gender stereotypes, media visibility and inequality are strongly connected. Peripheral keywords also indicate emerging themes, such as identity, social media and performance, pointing to directions for future research.

Finally, when integrating these six views, it is observed that the scientific production on the representation of female athletes in the media presents relative conceptual solidity, with some authors and institutions standing out for their volume and impact. However, the fragmentation of co-authorship networks and geographic concentration still limit the global reach and intercultural dialogue of the area. The analyses reinforce the need to foster more diverse collaborations and to expand the thematic scope beyond traditional approaches, including less represented realities and contexts.

Thematic Literature Review

From a general methodological perspective, content analyses (both quantitative and qualitative) predominate in the field, focusing primarily on images and discourse, followed by complementary qualitative methods such as interviews and small-scale ethnographic studies. As previously noted, the articles mapped in this review address four major thematic areas. Accordingly, the content was categorised into: (1) the sexualisation of female athletes; (2) social issues; (3) gender equity in sport; and (4) topics related to the body and physiology of female athletes. These categories are discussed in turn below.

The most frequently addressed theme is the sexualisation of female athletes, corroborating previous findings that stereotypes which objectify and sexualise women remain embedded in how the female body is portrayed and communicated. Numerous studies indicate that female athletes are frequently represented with an emphasis on their bodies, aesthetics, and sensuality, rather than their sporting skills and achievements. This pattern is evident in both traditional media and on social media platforms, although the latter also offer athletes a space to challenge or renegotiate these representations. The main methodologies used in these studies include content and image analyses, focusing on photographs, television broadcasts, and social media profiles, particularly during mega-events. These findings reinforce the persistence of female athlete objectification, despite progress in visibility and women's athletic performance, and ongoing social debates aimed at combating such stereotypes. Leading journals in this area include *Communication & Sport*, *Feminist Media Studies*, and *Sport in Society*, indicating a strong editorial focus on media and gender studies.

The next theme, gender equity, highlights disparities in media coverage, both in quantity and in the nature of the content. Results show that women remain underrepresented, receive less screen time, and are given less attention in women's team sports or in disciplines with lower popularity. Media attention often requires an extraordinary achievement or unprecedented award by a female athlete. Studies in this category mainly employ quantitative content analysis, monitoring broadcasts and reports during large-scale sporting events, such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA Women's World Cup. Notable journals in this field include *Communication & Sport*, *Sport in Society* e *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*.

The third significant category brings together studies on social issues, combining approaches from sociology and cultural studies of sport. These works examine the intersections between gender, race, social class, and sexual orientation in the representation of female athletes. Findings show that Black, Latina, and other minority athletes are even more marginalised in media coverage or, when represented in images, are subjected to hyper-sexualisation or eroticisation, often disconnected from norms of athletic technique or class-based aesthetics. The lack of inclusive narratives for LGBTQIA+ athletes is also highlighted. These studies frequently rely on critical discourse analysis and qualitative approaches, including interviews and case studies. Prominent journals in this domain include the *Sociology of Sport Journal* e o *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, reaffirming the sociological and critical orientation of this theme.

The final thematic category concerns the female athlete and the physiological issues surrounding her sporting experience. This includes case studies involving high-profile athletes such as Serena Williams, illustrating media narratives around pregnancy, returning to elite performance, and tensions related to competitive ageing. More recently, the discussion has shifted to issues such as the discomfort surrounding visibility and public discourse on the onset of menstruation (menarche) in athletes. Studies have questioned why athletes are still discredited or made invisible during the menstrual cycle in elite competition. Another topic emerging in this field is the perception of older women being beyond the age to compete.

Articles published in journals such as *Sport in Society* explore the overlapping expectations around performance, motherhood, reproductive health, and age, demonstrating how the media reinforces taboos and exclusionary practices. These findings point to the need for more inclusive communication policies and practices that value the physiological and age diversity of female athletes.

From this analysis, we can reflect on the research questions guiding this study. About the behaviour of academic publications on female athlete representation in sports media, there has been a noticeable and steady increase, particularly following major sports events, as well as a growing engagement with discussions around social media impact.

As for the most relevant topics and publications, the themes of sexualisation and gender equity stand out as the most frequently investigated, revealing a still-archaic landscape that requires greater efforts toward breaking stereotypical patterns.

Finally, the mapping of authors, journals, institutions and countries demonstrates the consolidation of a relatively defined and concentrated academic community. A small group of authors stands out for their recurrence and impact, often associated with research centres located in the United States and the United Kingdom — the two countries most central in the international collaboration networks. Journals such as *Communication & Sport*, *Sport in Society*, *Feminist Media Studies* and the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* emerge as the most frequent and influential publishing platforms. Institutionally, the University of Alabama System, Durham University, and the University of Memphis are among the most productive and cited, reinforcing their role as hubs for research on gender and media in sport. However, the network visualisations also show a fragmentation in collaborations, with clusters operating in parallel and limited integration of countries from the Global South, notably the absence of Latin America in international co-authorship networks. This highlights the need for more geographically diverse and inclusive research agendas, capable of capturing different cultural and structural dynamics in media portrayals of female athletes.

In summary, **the findings of this systematic review highlight that the academic production on the representation of women athletes in the media, while growing and increasingly diverse, continues to reflect longstanding imbalances in visibility, content framing and global participation. The thematic categories examined here — sexualisation, social issues, gender equity and physiological aspects — expose the complex intersections between media narratives and structural gender biases in sport. The growing presence of critical and interdisciplinary approaches has contributed to broadening the field, while bibliometric analyses point to opportunities for greater collaboration, especially across regions and disciplines. Moving forward, expanding the dialogue between regions, incorporating emerging voices, and embracing plural epistemologies will be essential to advance this research agenda and foster more equitable representations of women in sport.**

A limitation of this literature review lies in its focus on only two academic databases and a ten-year publication window, which may exclude relevant studies published outside these parameters. However, these criteria were adopted to ensure a more contemporary and scientifically rigorous selection of studies.

Final considerations

This systematic review sought to map and analyse the academic production on the representation of women athletes in sports media over the last decade. Through thematic categorisation, bibliometric analysis and visualisation of relational networks, **the study revealed a growing yet still unbalanced field. The predominance of themes such as sexualisation and gender inequity reflects the persistence of structural stereotypes in media portrayals, while the rise of studies addressing social and physiological issues indicates an expanding and diversifying research agenda.** The concentration of authors, institutions and journals in the Global North — particularly in the United States and United Kingdom — underscores the need for broader epistemological and geographical inclusion. Although the increasing volume of publications and interinstitutional collaboration signals a positive trajectory, gaps remain in the globalisation of the discourse and the integration of underrepresented perspectives. Advancing the field will require not only theoretical innovation and methodological pluralism but also the active incorporation of voices and contexts from regions historically marginalised in academic production. Strengthening these dimensions will be essential for achieving a more equitable and comprehensive understanding of how media representations influence — and are influenced by — the presence and performance of women in sport.



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“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
National Reports



Co-funded by
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Contextual Settings

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of how women athletes were portrayed in sports media across Europe, each partner involved in the POWER project was responsible for producing a dedicated national report. These reports represented a key step in contextualising the findings from all research stages—bibliometric analysis, media content analysis, focus groups, and audience survey—within the specific media and cultural frameworks of each participating country.

Each national report was prepared by the respective partner organisation and presented the main findings of the empirical research conducted at the national level. These reports reflected on specific challenges and patterns related to the media representation of female athletes. Initially drafted in the national language, each document was subsequently translated into English.

Following the completion and translation of all national reports, the Work Package leader (SEA) collected and reviewed the documents and coordinated the preparation of a consolidated EU report. This final output offered a comparative analysis of findings across the six partner countries, highlighted both common trends and country-specific distinctions, and provided cross-national conclusions and recommendations to improve gender representation in sports media.

“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Bulgaria



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Introduction

In **Bulgaria**, the sports media landscape still reflects notable gender imbalances, especially in terms of visibility and depth of coverage. Male athletes continue to dominate the news agenda, with significantly more articles and broader media attention. At the same time, however, our analysis also reveals some encouraging developments in how female athletes are portrayed. Across all examined media channels, the tone of coverage was mostly positive and respectful, with no openly sexist language and only occasional subtle bias. In fact, when female athletes were featured, the focus was often on their achievements, skills, and leadership – highlighting a more affirming and professional narrative than expected. While the overall media coverage on female athletes remains much lower compared to men, and their media visibility is still inconsistent, these positive elements suggest that certain editorial practices are slowly shifting towards more inclusive standards.

BG1. Newspaper analysis

This section presents findings from the analysis of Bulgarian newspaper content related to the portrayal of female athletes. Due to structural limitations in the Bulgarian print media sector – such as the unavailability of archived print editions and lack of public access to PDF formats – the analysis was conducted using the digital versions of two newspapers: one general-interest and one sports-specific. Because of this, the term "edition" in this report refers to the publication date of an article; each distinct date on which an article appears on either newspaper's website is counted as a separate edition. A total of 40 newspaper editions published between June 2024 and February 2025 were examined, with data collection taking place from February to April 2025.

BG 1.1. Number of analysed editions per newspaper

The table below presents the distribution of the 40 newspaper editions analysed in the Bulgarian case study, according to the newspaper of origin. Editions from two widely circulated national newspapers were included: **24 Часа / 24 Hours**, (general news newspaper), and **7 Дни Спорт / 7 Days Sport** (sport-related newspaper).

Table 7 Number of analysed editions per newspaper

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of newspaper editions analysed	Percentage
24 Часа	No	20	50%
7 Дни Спорт	Yes	20	50%
Total		40	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of newspaper editions from the two digitalized newspapers, enabling a comparative analysis between editorial profiles. The inclusion of generalist newspapers is crucial to understanding how sport — particularly women's sport — is portrayed in non-specialised media.

BG 1.2. Period of the data collection

Table 8 presents the distribution of the 40 newspaper editions by their month of publication. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 8 Distribution of the newspaper editions per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
Jun/24	4	10%
Jul/24	4	10%
Aug/24	8	20%
Sep/24	4	10%
Oct/24	4	10%
Nov/24	4	10%
Dec/24	4	10%
Jan/25	4	10%
Feb/25	4	10%
Total	40	100%

As shown in Table 8, the editions are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in August 2024 (20%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to the Paris Olympics. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 9 shows the distribution of the 40 newspaper editions according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 9 Distribution of the newspaper editions per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	10	25%
Tuesday	8	20%
Wednesday	4	10%
Thursday	4	10%
Friday	8	20%
Saturday	4	10%
Sunday	2	5%
Total	40	100%

As shown in Table 3, the data show that newspapers are most frequently shown on Mondays, with around 25%. Sundays have the lowest percentage at about 5%, possibly due to a weekend slowdown in publication activity. The distribution remains relatively steady during the week with days like Tuesday and Friday, each accounting for approximately 20%, indicating a consistent publishing pattern throughout these days.

BG 1.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of articles dedicated to male and female's athletes per newspaper edition. The data are grouped into ranges based on the observed volume of coverage. It is worth noting that 14 editions (35%) included no reference to neither male nor female athletes at all.

Table 10 indicates whether each of the 40 analysed editions included any mention of female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of editions with no mention is highlighted to help assess the extent of female invisibility in the sports media landscape.

Table 10 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	23	57.5%
No	3	7.5%
Editions with no sports mentioning	14	35%
Total	40	100%

As per Table 10, out of the 40 analysed newspaper editions, 23 (57.5%) included at least one mention of female athletes, while only 3 editions (7.5%) covered sports content but did not mention women at all. Additionally, 14 editions (35%) featured no sports content whatsoever.

These figures indicate that just over half of the editions provided some visibility to female athletes, while a significant portion either omitted women from their sports coverage or excluded sports altogether.

Table 11 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	14	17
One	3	4
Between 2 and 4	3	11
Between 5 and 8	1	5
More than 8	19	3
Total (valid responses)	40	

Based on the data in Table 11, the analysis reveals a clear gender imbalance in the volume of sports coverage. Out of the 40 analysed editions, 19 featured more than eight articles on male

athletes, while only 3 editions reached the same level for female athletes. Furthermore, 17 editions included no articles about women, compared to 14 editions with no coverage of men. Half of the editions (50%) included between two and eight articles about female athletes, suggesting that while women are present in the sports media landscape, their coverage tends to be limited in depth and frequency. In contrast, male athletes received significantly broader attention, with only 7.5% of editions including fewer than two articles about them. These findings highlight the persistent underrepresentation of female athletes in Bulgarian newspaper sports coverage, pointing to systemic editorial priorities that continue to favour men's sports.

BG 1.3.1. Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes in Bulgaria

A t-test was conducted on a sample of 40 newspaper editions analysed in Bulgaria, collected between May 2024 and February 2025, with the aim of comparing the average number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes during this period. The results show that, on average, the editions contained 4.74 articles (SD = 4.28) about male athletes and 2.41 articles (SD = 2.88) about female athletes. Both values are statistically greater than zero, with highly significant results ($t(39) = 7.005$ for men; $t(39) = 5.290$ for women; $p < .001$ in both cases). The effect size measured by Cohen's d was 1.11 for male athletes (large) and 0.84 for female athletes (moderate to large).

Table 12 Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes

Gender	Mean articles per edition	SD	t value	p (two-tailed)	Cohen's d
Male	4.74	4.28	7.005	< .001	1.11
Female	2.41	2.88	5.290	< .001	0.84

These results in Table 12 confirm that male athletes receive, on average, nearly twice the number of articles per edition as female athletes. While both groups are positively represented to a statistically significant degree, the gender gap remains notable, pointing to persistent inequality in sports media visibility.

BG 1.4 Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the entire sample, 23 newspaper editions were identified in Bulgaria that included any mention of female athletes. Within these 23 editions, **72 articles** were examined in detail and constitute the basis for a more comprehensive analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in sports journalism. The following section examines various aspects of these 72 articles.

Table 13 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Bulgaria

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Number of articles	Total	72	100%
Is the article sport-related?	Yes	62	86.1%

	No	10	13.9%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	19	26.4%
	Individual sports	53	73.6%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	49	68.1%
	Olympic	22	30.5%
	Grassroots	-	-
	Amateur	1	1.4%

As shown in Table 13, out of 72 articles featuring female athletes, the vast majority (86.1%) were sport-related, underscoring the media's focus on women's athletic achievements. 13.9% of articles presented female athletes outside of sport, often highlighting lifestyle or social themes. Within sport-related coverage, individual sports were the focus in 73.6% of articles, surpassing team sports at 26.4%. Professional athletes dominated the narrative, appearing in nearly 70% of articles, while Olympic athletes accounted for about a third. Amateur athletes were minimally covered, appearing in only 1.4% of articles, while grassroots-level were not covered at all. **This indicates a gap in media attention for non-elite women's sport.**

BG 1.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As already mentioned, data collection in Bulgaria identified 72 articles mentioning female athletes. Analysis of these texts revealed no instances of overtly sexist language or derogatory expressions based on gender. This suggests that, in the cases where women are included, journalistic discourse tends to avoid openly discriminatory terminology.

Sexualisation and objectification were also rare, appearing in only two articles. These cases featured a focus on appearance rather than athletic performance and included provocative or objectifying language that reduced athletes to their looks. Notably, these instances involved only foreign female athletes – no Bulgarian athlete was sexualised in the sample. In fact, there were isolated examples where male athletes were framed in a similar way, suggesting that such portrayals, while problematic, are not exclusively directed at women. As for gender stereotypes, only two articles questioned the femininity of the athletes or framed them as secondary to men.

While these numbers are low, it is important to keep in mind that the dataset consists only of articles that already include women – meaning the sample might reflect a more favourable portrayal than the broader media landscape. Still, the low frequency of biased or harmful language points toward a cautiously positive shift in how Bulgarian newspapers cover female athletes, even if deeper inequalities in visibility and narrative depth remain.

BG 1.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

Among the 72 articles analysed, only 3 (4.2%) included negative framing of the female athlete, focusing the narrative on disciplinary issues – a case that raises concerns about the reinforcement of stigma, even if isolated. On the other hand, 50 articles (69.4%) demonstrated

positive framing of female athletes, while 19 articles (26.4%) maintained a neutral tone. The qualitative analysis of the positively framed articles revealed several recurring patterns. In 12% of the cases (6 articles), the text combined the celebration of achievements, leadership qualities, and the development of talent. Another 10% (5 articles) highlighted both achievements and talent, while 6% (3 articles) combined achievements with leadership. Sole focus on talent and skills was the most common pattern, appearing in 32% of the positively framed articles (16 articles). Leadership alone featured in 8% (4 articles), and leadership combined with talent development appeared in 14% (7 articles). A smaller portion (6 articles, or 12%) celebrated achievements while also highlighting inspiring personal stories, leadership, and talent.

Positive Framing of Female Athletes in Bulgarian Newspapers (n=50)

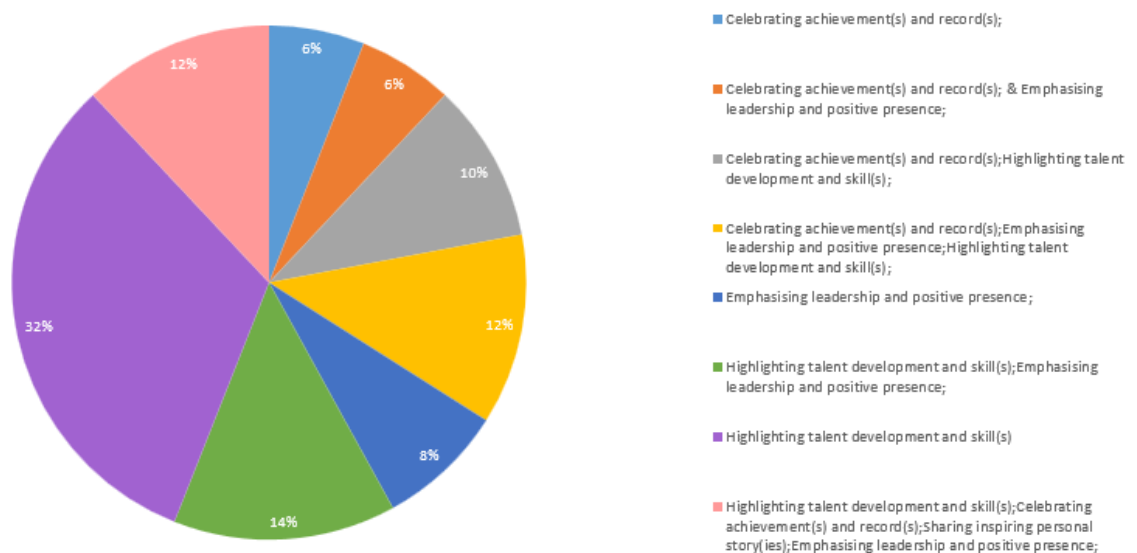


Figure 8 Categorisation of positive framing text

These findings suggest that when female athletes are portrayed in a positive light, **Bulgarian media tends to emphasise their skill and potential, followed by leadership and achievements – indicating a preference for framing women through competence-based narratives rather than sensationalism or stereotypical angles.**

BG 1.5 Presence and number of images in the articles

Among the 72 articles that featured female athletes, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 35% of the articles (25 articles) included no images of the

mentioned athlete, in 61% of the cases (44 articles), there was only one image, and in 4% of cases (3 articles), two or more images were identified.

Regarding the size of the images, there was a clear predominance of smaller visual formats (see Figure 9). These findings suggest that, even when female athletes are visually represented, the images tend to occupy modest editorial space, potentially limiting their impact.

Size of images featured in newspaper articles on female athletes (n = 47)

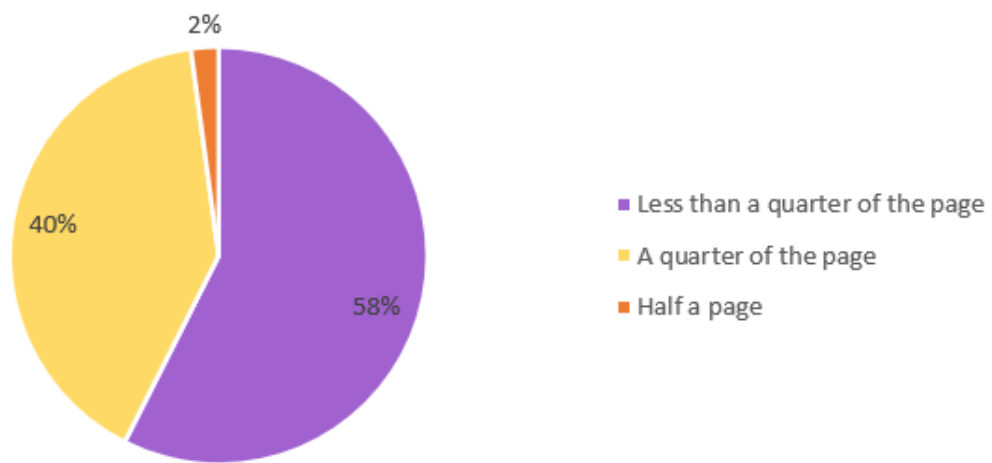


Figure 9 Size of the image

BG 1.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the image & negative framing

Among the 47 articles containing images of female athletes, **no cases of sexualisation, objectification, gender stereotypes, or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visuals.** On the other hand, 39 articles – the majority of the articles examined (83%) included positive framing in visual representation, while the remaining 8 articles (17%) kept neutral imagery of female athletes. **This indicates a predominantly appreciative approach to portraying women in sport.**

BG 1.5.2. Positive framing in the images

Positive Framing of Female Athletes in Bulgarian Newspapers (n=39)

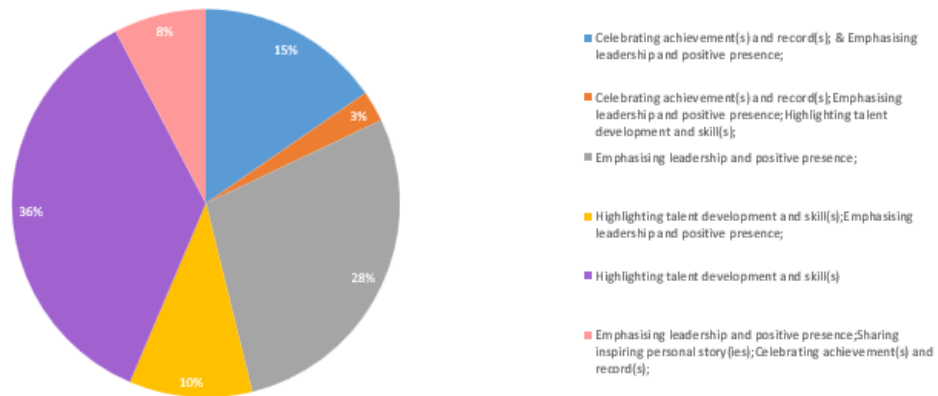


Figure 10 Categorisation of positive framing images

The analysis of 39 articles revealed a consistent use of positive framing in the visual depiction of female athletes. The most common narrative was highlighting talent development and skills (36%), followed by emphasizing leadership and positive presence (28%), indicating a growing editorial tendency to present female athletes as successful, skilled, and influential figures. **While the sample size is limited, the data suggest a favourable shift toward multidimensional and empowering portrayals of women in sport.**

With the aim of deepening the qualitative analysis of the positive media representations of female athletes, a bipartite network visualisation was created using Gephi software (version 0.10.1). The network was constructed by cross-referencing the headlines of news articles with the previously coded categories of positive framing, such as “celebration of achievements”, “development of talent”, or “leadership and positive presence”.

For this purpose, the network nodes were organised into two distinct types: article headlines and thematic categories, allowing a visual representation of the relationship between the published content and the symbolic framings attributed to the athletes. The connections (edges) indicate the presence of a specific category within a given headline.

The data were organised into two spreadsheets, one listing the nodes and the other the connections, and were imported into Gephi Software (V. 0.10). Following importation, the ForceAtlas2 layout algorithm was applied, as it is particularly suitable for networks that exhibit a modular or community-based structure.

The colour and size of the nodes were also adjusted to facilitate visual distinction between the two node types and to highlight their relative importance within the network, with blue used to represent the categories and pink for the headlines. This methodological step enabled a visual identification of patterns of co-occurrence, density of connections, and semantic

centrality within the journalistic discourse, clearly revealing the main forms of symbolic appreciation attributed to female athletes in the analysed headlines.

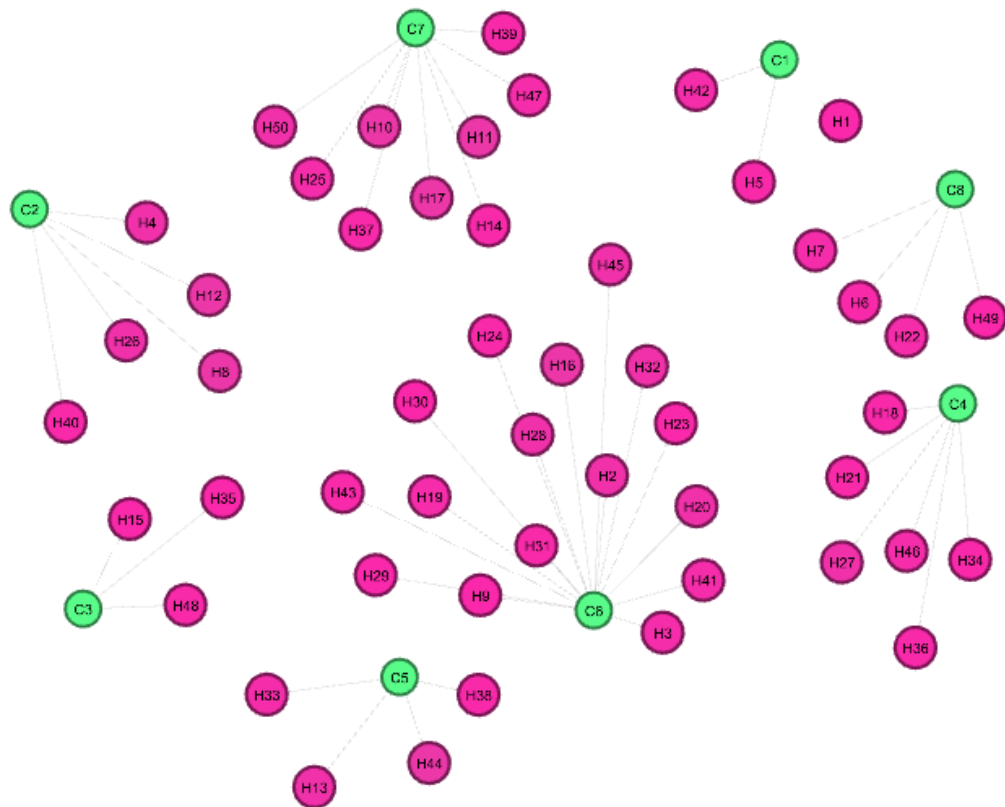


Figure 11 Network between headlines and positive categories

Table 14 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Bulgaria

Code	Category and Headlines
C1	Celebrating achievement and records
C2	Celebrating achievement and records; Highlighting talent development;
C3	Celebrating achievement and records; Leadership and positive presence
C4	Celebrating achievement and records; Highlighting talent development; Leadership and positive presence
C5	Leadership and positive presence
C6	Highlighting talent development
C7	Leadership and positive presence; Highlighting talent development
C8	Celebrating achievement and records; Highlighting talent development; Leadership and positive presence; Inspiring personal story
H1	Great success for Bulgaria with 6th place at the European Artistic Swimming Championship

H2	Teya Nikolova: Seven hundredths of a second is just a blink of an eye. Hopefully next time it will be in my favour.
H3	Viktoriya Tomova lost her battle with a Chinese player at Wimbledon
H4	A Bulgarian woman is the fastest European in the under-18 category, breaking a 30-year-old record.
H5	Bronze medallist Canadian athlete promotes her account for erotic photos because of the Olympics
H6	Boryana Kaleyn gave her talisman from Paris to Madlen Radukanova, who inspired her with hers from Tokyo.
H7	Destiny took Sarah Story's left arm, but then covered her with a pile of gold.
H8	Milena Todorova and Lora Hristova with victories at the Balkan Summer Biathlon Championship in Bansko
H9	More money and teams in women's volleyball after new contract with the sponsor
H10	Bulgaria's girls under 15 perform well at UEFA development tournament
H11	Viktoriya Tomova eliminated the champion at the start in Tokyo, with another match awaiting her.
H12	Kaloyana Nalbantova secured a medal at the European Badminton Championships
H13	Sabalenka raised the trophy in Brisbane after a comeback
H14	Sinner and Swiatek are world champions in tennis
H15	Boryana Kaleyn crowned Sofia's №1
H16	The wonderful Sevda Asenova, Zlati Chukanova, and Venelina Poptoleva in the final of the Strandzha Cup
H17	Vicky Tomova debuts in the Top 60 of the rankings
H18	The audience in Paris gave a standing ovation after Bulgaria's performance! Our golden girls are currently second in the Olympics.
H19	The national team under 18 defeated Turkey at the European Championship
H20	The Stoevi sisters before Paris 2024: We saw that Asian women are not robots
H21	The fierce Boriana Kaleyn played as if there were no tomorrow and brought Bulgaria to tears! We have an Olympic silver medallist after 36 years.
H22	Boryana Kaleyn: My favourite were the clubs; they recreate the most difficult moments I have gone through.
H23	Glushkova wins in Brasov, Karatancheva drops out
H24	Viktoriya Tomova climbs two places in world rankings
H25	Tomova remains in the world's top 50, Sabalenka is still No. 1
H26	Shiffrin's 99th victory came, warming up for her 100th in front of her home crowd.
H27	Valentina Georgieva was named Bulgaria's best young athlete for 2024.

H28	Only Biliana Dudova will represent Bulgaria in the first major wrestling tournament
H29	Bulgaria ranks sixth in the mixed relay at the Biathlon World Championships in Östersund
H30	Bulgaria with six athletes at the Paris Olympics: Plamena Mitkova leads the team
H31	Viktoriya Tomova reached the quarterfinals in Valencia
H32	Spanish player knocks champion Vondrousova out of Wimbledon
H33	The Golden Girls lit up the Olympic Village
H34	Extraordinary hoops and inspiring ribbons and balls sent the heirs to the diamonds into the battle for medals with a first-rate assessment.
H35	Kimia Alizadeh tells Vogue: Taekwondo taught me not to give up
H36	Our riders finished with two team victories and a respectable ranking in Istanbul.
H37	Plamena Mitkova nominated for rising star of European athletics
H38	The Stoevi sisters reach the semi-finals in Sofia
H39	3 victories for Bulgaria at the Australian Open
H40	Viktoriya Tomova is in the world's top 60 for the first time
H41	Lia Karatancheva wins in the Netherlands
H42	Ukrainian athlete Mahuchikh thanks Stefka Kostadinova for her inspiration
H43	Bilyana Dudova started with a victory
H44	Bulgaria failed to win a medal at the European Under-20 Championship on home soil, but qualified for the World Championship.
H45	Three Bulgarian tennis players in the top 20 of the world rankings for girls
H46	Milena Todorova is delighted with her outstanding performance in the mass start
H47	Bulgaria's captain: After the victory over Hungary, we are craving for more
H48	Bulgaria started with a victory in the European Volleyball Championship for women under 20 in Sofia
H49	An Italian woman will be the first transgender athlete at the Paralympics in Paris
H50	Lia Karatancheva continues to advance on two fronts in Pazardzhik

The network analysis revealed several key elements:

Thematic centrality: The category “Highlighting talent development and skills” stands out as the most connected node, appearing in multiple headlines. This result reinforces the dominance of a success and merit-based narrative as the primary form of media recognition for female athletes.

Other relevant categories: The category “Leadership and positive presence” also shows high connectivity, forming thematic clusters around the symbolic appreciation of athletes as models

of excellence and inspiration. Moreover, a lot of headlines are linked to combinative categories, which demonstrates the complexity of positive framing.

Visual distribution and clustering: The network formed visually distinct subsets, grouping headlines by thematic category. This clustering reinforces the idea that certain types of positive framing tend to appear systematically and consistently within the media discourse.

BG 1.6 Final synthesis of findings of the newspapers' analysis

The findings from the Bulgarian newspapers **reveal both encouraging signs and ongoing challenges in the media representation of female athletes**. While many headlines frame women in sport through positive narratives – celebrating their achievements, talent, and leadership – the overall volume, visibility, and consistency of such portrayals **still fall behind those of male athletes**. Female athletes remain **underrepresented not only in terms of the number of published articles but also in the visual prominence given to their stories**.

The media coverage tends to highlight elite-level performances, with grassroots or emerging female athletes receiving **limited attention**. Although our sample did not reveal overt instances of sexist language or highly problematic framings, this does not contradict the broader concerns expressed in other research and testimonies from athletes and journalists in Bulgaria. The tendency to rely on isolated positive framings, rather than deeper, multi-dimensional narratives, points to a still-fragile space for women in sports journalism. This highlights the need for more systematic, large-scale research – combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches – to better understand how gender roles and power dynamics shape the visibility of female athletes in the Bulgarian media.

The final part of this report will present findings from the focus groups, offering further insights into public perceptions, persistent stereotypes, and other key indicators related to the media portrayal of women in sport.

BG2. Online sports media platforms analysis

The sample of online sports publications analysed in Bulgaria included two sport-specific digital media platforms: **Novsport** and **Sportal.bg**. These platforms cover different segments of the wider sports media landscape without focusing on any particular sport. They offer a broad range of content, including sports news, live scores, and exclusive materials such as video reports and interviews.

The same 10 publication dates were selected from each outlet – a total of 20 data entries, covering the period between June 2024 and February 2025. These dates span various weekdays and reflect the diversity of editorial calendars across different online media. Across the 20 entries, over 200 articles were analysed to assess how coverage is distributed between male and female athletes – both per day and per media outlet. This approach provides insight into the visibility and representation of athletes within the context of sports journalism in Bulgaria.

BG 2.1. Number of analysed publication dates per online sports media

The table below summarizes the number of data entries collected from each of the two sports media platforms. It reflects the total number of publication dates analysed per outlet, regardless of gender focus or athlete type:

Table 15 Distribution of the publication dates per website

Online Sports Media	Number of publication dates	Percentage
Novsport	10	50%
Sportal.bg	10	50%
Total	20	100%

A total of 20 publication days from online sports media platforms were analysed. These data entries were evenly distributed between two major Bulgarian sports news websites: **Novsport** and **Sportal.bg**. Each platform contributed 10 data entries, accounting for 50% of the total sample. This equal distribution suggests a balanced representation of content from both sources, allowing for a fair comparison in any further analysis of themes, tone, or coverage style between the two outlets. The data also highlight the prominent role both **Novsport** and **Sportal.bg** play in the online sports media landscape in Bulgaria.

BG 2.2. Period of the data collection

Tables 16 and 17 present the distribution of the 20 entries analysed from Bulgarian online sports media platforms according to the month and day of publication. Data were collected between June 2024 and February 2025, offering a temporal snapshot across multiple seasons and editorial cycles.

Table 16 Distribution of data entries per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
Jun/24	2	10%
Jul/24	2	10%
Aug/24	4	20%
Sep/24	2	10%
Oct/24	2	10%
Nov/24	2	10%
Dec/24	2	10%
Jan/25	2	10%
Feb/25	2	10%
Total	20	100%

The above table indicates that the distribution of the 20 data entries spans from June 2024 to February 2025. Most months saw a steady output of 2 each (10%), except for August 2024, which had a notable peak with 4 publication days analysed (20%). The increased frequency in August aligns with the 2024 Summer Olympics, suggesting that the heightened media interest and coverage of Olympic events drove a temporary surge in article production. Aside from this peak, the even distribution of data entries across other months supports a comprehensive view of coverage patterns over time, mitigating the risk of seasonal bias.

Table 17 Distribution of data entries per weekday of publication

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	4	20%
Tuesday	6	30%
Wednesday	4	20%
Thursday	-	-
Friday	4	20%
Saturday	-	-
Sunday	2	10%
Total	20	100%

As shown in Table 17, the highest number of editions appeared on Tuesday (30%), which may reflect the media's effort to summarise and analyse weekend sports events at the start of the week. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday each accounted for 20%, suggesting these are also active publishing days likely tied to ongoing competitions and pre-event coverage. Sunday had the lowest presence (10%), while Thursday and Saturday had no selected editions, possibly indicating reduced editorial activity or lower content output on those days. This distribution reflects the dynamics of the sports media calendar and how coverage tends to cluster around key competition and reporting periods.

BG 2.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This section compares the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per online sports media platform. The data were grouped into ranges based on the volume of coverage observed.

Table 18 indicates whether each of the 20 analysed publication dates mentioned female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of days without any mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility in online sports media.

Table 18 Mention of female athletes in the online sport sites

Are female athletes mentioned on the publication date analysed?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	19	95%
No	1	5%
Total	20	100%

As Table 18 shows, female athletes were mentioned in 19 out of the 20 analysed publication dates (95%), indicating that women are not entirely excluded from online sports coverage. However, the one-day absence (5%) still signals that female visibility is not guaranteed in every editorial cycle. While the high percentage may reflect some progress towards inclusivity, the deeper analysis below reveals that female athletes are often underrepresented in both quantity and prominence compared to their male counterparts. This highlights an ongoing gender imbalance in sports journalism that goes beyond mere visibility.

The distribution of article counts dedicated to male and female athletes across the 20 publication dates is presented in the following table.

Table 19 Number of articles dedicated to male and female's athletes per publication date

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	-	1
One	-	5
Between 2 and 4	-	2
Between 5 and 8	-	1
More than 8	20	11
Total (valid responses)	20	

As shown in Table 19, across the 20 analysed publication dates from Novsport and Sportal.bg, male athletes consistently received extensive coverage. On every single date, more than eight articles were dedicated to male sports, showing a strong and unchanging editorial focus on men's competitions. This 100% consistency reflects a dominant pattern where male athletes are the main subjects of sports reporting, reinforcing their visibility and perceived importance in the digital sports media landscape.

In contrast, the representation of female athletes was more uneven. Only 11 out of 20 publication dates (55%) featured more than eight articles focused on women's sports. Five editions (25%) had just one article on female athletes, while two dates included between two and four articles, and one date had between five and eight. Notably, one publication date had no articles about female athletes at all, underscoring that full inclusion is still not guaranteed.

These results confirm that while **female athletes are present in Bulgarian digital sports media, they are far less likely to receive high-volume or consistent coverage**. The stark contrast with the uninterrupted coverage of male athletes suggests a clear gender imbalance. Although there are signs of progress – especially in the fact that most days included at least some female-focused content – the scale and regularity of that coverage remain significantly lower. This supports the ongoing observation that sports journalism continues to prioritise men's sports, both in visibility and editorial weight.

BG 2.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Within the 20 publication dates examined across two major Bulgarian sports media outlets, over 200 articles were reviewed to assess how coverage is distributed between male and female athletes. From these, a total of 59 articles focusing on female athletes were **analysed in detail** to explore how women were actually portrayed in sports media platforms in Bulgaria.

Table 20 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Bulgaria

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	18	30.51%
	Individual sports	45	76.27%
	Mixed Team Sport	2	3.39%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	2	3.39%
	Grassroots	1	1.69%
	Professional	47	79.66%
	Olympic	22	37.29%

Table 20 shows that out of 59 articles, the majority focused on individual sports, which appeared in 76.27% of the cases (45 articles). Team sports were featured in 30.51% of the articles (18), while mixed team sports were represented in just 3.39% (2 articles). These figures show that individual sports receive significantly more editorial attention when it comes to female athletes, suggesting a preference for highlighting solo achievements rather than team-based performances.

When looking at the competitive level of the featured athletes, professional women dominated the coverage – appearing in 79.66% of the articles (47). Olympic-level athletes were included in 37.29% of the sample (22 articles), indicating a solid presence of high-performance women in the media. On the other hand, amateur athletes were represented in only 3.39% (2 articles), and grassroots-level participants in just 1.69% (1 article), pointing to a clear lack of visibility for female athletes outside the elite sphere.

It's also important to note that the categories are not exclusive – many articles likely featured athletes who fall under multiple classifications, such as a professional competing at the Olympic level or individuals involved in both solo and team disciplines. This overlap reflects a degree of complexity in how female athletes are portrayed. However, **the overall pattern reveals a strong editorial bias toward professional and individual-level coverage, while grassroots and amateur women in sport remain largely invisible.** Despite some diversity in representation, the focus on elite, individual athletes reinforces existing hierarchies in sports journalism and limits the portrayal of the broader spectrum of women's participation in sport.

BG 2.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

In the Bulgarian sample of 59 articles focusing on female athletes, published across 20 different dates, the vast majority of the content maintained a neutral or respectful tone. Most articles avoided openly discriminatory language and focused primarily on the athletes' performance, achievements, or participation in competitions. However, several problematic instances were still observed that suggest subtle – and occasionally overt – biases in the way women in sport are portrayed.

Sexist language was identified in three articles. One particularly striking example came from a headline that read, "A woman takes over England?" – framing the female subject as an anomaly. Even more explicit was the case of a female boxer, where two headlines from the same outlet referred to her with phrases like "Her body is boyish" and "She has a man's physique." Such language reduces the athlete's identity to physical traits and enforces harmful gender expectations.

Trivialization of performance occurred in one article, which downplayed a female athlete's success in badminton by framing it in a sensationalized way that diverted attention from the sporting achievement itself. Gender stereotypes were identified in three articles. In one, the article emphasised the athlete's appearance or personal life over her professional merits.

Sexualization or objectification was also present in two articles. For example, one headline focused on female basketball player's appearance rather than her athletic role. One article even centred almost entirely on the athlete's private life, including the use of an unrelated personal image, and barely mentioned her sports performance.

On a more positive note, some content did highlight women's accomplishments in a dignified and empowering manner. For example, one report covered the recognition of Stefka Kostadinova – one of Bulgaria's most iconic athletes – selected to represent Bulgaria in the European Parliament's exhibition "Women and Sport in the EU." This kind of coverage points to the potential of sports journalism to uplift and honour women in sport.

Overall, problematic portrayals were limited to a small share of the sample (roughly 8%). Most articles did not include overt sexualization, objectification, or openly sexist terminology. Still,

these isolated but recurring examples demonstrate that subtle biases and outdated gender framing still persist in parts of Bulgarian online sports media.

BG 2.4.2. Negative, neutral and positive framing in the text

In the sample of 59 articles that mentioned female athletes in Bulgarian online sports outlets, only 2 articles (3.39 %) exhibited elements of negative framing. In both of these cases, the focus was on highlighting sanctions or disciplinary issues. Aside from these two examples, 13 articles (22%) adopted a neutral and objective tone – reporting on sporting events or athlete participation without adding symbolic meaning or interpretive commentary. The remaining articles (approximately 75%) were framed in a positive and affirming way, as discussed in the following section.

The positive framing of female athletes in the Bulgarian sample reveals a clear editorial trend toward empowerment, recognition, and appreciation of athletic merit. Out of the 59 articles analysed, 44 (around 75%) presented female athletes in a positive light – often highlighting their achievements, leadership qualities, skill development, or inspiring personal journeys.

Positive Framing of Female Athletes in Bulgarian Sports Media Platforms (n=44)

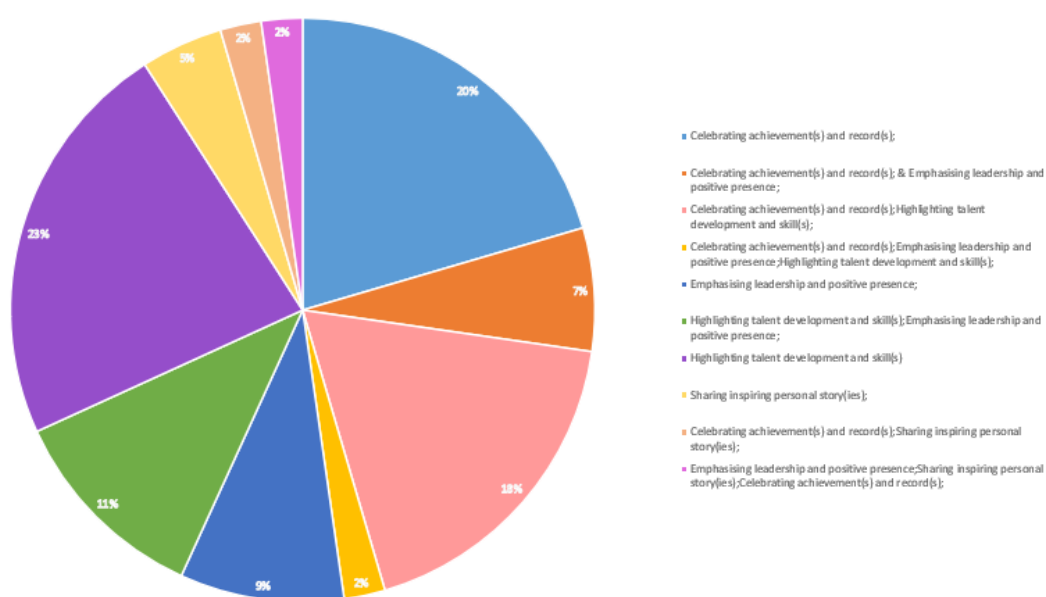


Figure 12 Categorisation of positive framing text

The most common symbolic element observed was the **emphasis on talent development and skill(s)**, present in approximately 23% of the positively framed articles. This was closely followed by articles that celebrated athletic achievements and records (20%), and those that highlighted a combination of skill and achievement (18%). Another 11% of articles combined leadership and skill-related framing, while 9% focused solely on leadership and positive presence.

Although less frequent, inspirational personal stories were also included, appearing in 5% of the articles on their own and in another 4% when combined with other empowering elements such as leadership or record-breaking success. Only a small portion (2%) of the articles presented a fully layered framing—simultaneously celebrating achievement, leadership, and skill development in a single piece.

This data reflects a nuanced and layered editorial approach in Bulgarian digital sports media. When positive framing occurs, it often includes multiple symbolic elements, portraying female athletes not only as winners or role models but also as skilled professionals with evolving careers. Such portrayals contribute to a broader narrative of inclusion and competence, signalling that sports media in Bulgaria is increasingly capable of moving beyond stereotypical or reductive portrayals.

BG2.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

All 59 articles in the Bulgarian sample that featured female athletes included at least one image of the mentioned athletes, resulting in a 100% visual inclusion rate. This consistent presence suggests a clear editorial effort to visually represent female athletes whenever they are mentioned in sports news. Out of the 59 articles, 47 (79.66%) included only one image, while 6 articles (10.17%) featured more than three images, showing a stronger visual emphasis in a small number of cases. These figures point to a generally stable but uneven approach to visual representation. While it is clear that female athletes are not overlooked in terms of imagery, the extent of visual coverage varies—most often limited to a single photo, with only a few articles offering a more detailed and visually rich presentation.

BG2.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the images

Among the 59 analysed articles containing images of female athletes, 5 articles (8%) included instances of problematic visual representation. For example, in 3 articles there were clear elements of sexualisation and objectification through inappropriate or unnecessary focus on the athlete's bodies. Another 2 articles featured gender-stereotypical imagery of female athletes, questioning their "femininity". **These findings suggest that while female athletes are visually represented, the quality of their portrayal in a notable minority of cases remains influenced by gender bias and reductive stereotypes.**

On the other hand, 37 articles – the majority of the articles examined (63%) included positive framing in visual representation, while the remaining articles (29%) kept neutral imagery of female athletes. This indicates a predominantly appreciative approach to portraying women in sport.

Positive Framing of Female Athletes in Bulgarian Sports Media Platforms (n=37)

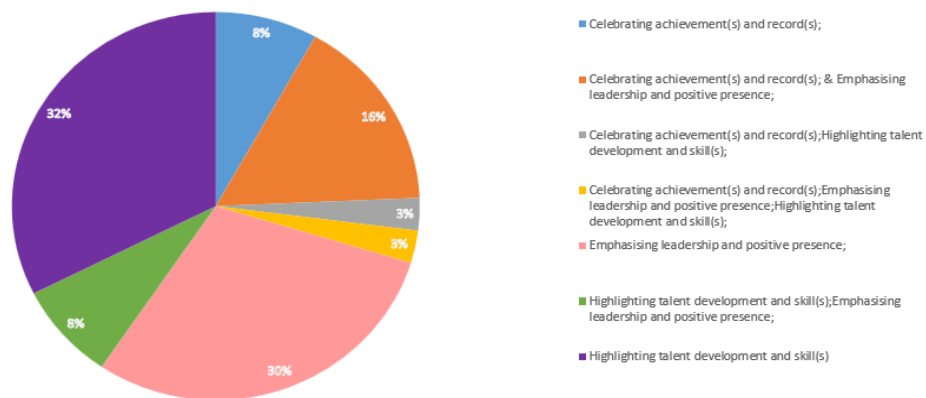


Figure 13 Categorisation of positive framing images

The analysis of 59 articles revealed a consistent use of positive framing in the visual depiction of female athletes. The most common narrative was highlighting talent development and skills (32%), followed by emphasising leadership and positive presence (30%), indicating a growing editorial tendency to present female athletes as successful, skilled, and influential figures. **While the sample size is limited, the data suggest a favourable shift toward multidimensional and empowering portrayals of women in sport.**

BG2.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the positive framing of female athletes, we analysed the 37 articles from the Bulgarian sample of online sports media platforms that included visual representations of women in sport. This qualitative subsample is notably small and therefore requires cautious interpretation, yet it provides relevant insights into symbolic media representations.

Two main variables were considered in the analysis:

- *Image size*: coded based on the visual coverage in the article (i.e., less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half a page);
- *Positive framing in the image*: identified through previous qualitative codification into categories such as Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s), Highlighting talent development and skill(s), Emphasizing leadership and positive presence, and sharing inspiring personal story(ies).

Table 21 Cross-tabulation of image size and positive framing categories (n = 37)

Image size	Positive framing categories	Frequency	Percentage
Small (< ¼ of the article)	Highlighting talent development and skill(s);	5	13.5%

¼ of the article	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	5	13.5%
	Emphasising leadership and positive presence;	3	8.1%
	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	6	16.2%
Half the article	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s) and Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)	7	18.9%
More than half the article	Emphasising leadership and positive presence and Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	11	29.7%

As shown in Table 21, the analysis of the 37 online sports media articles from the Bulgarian sample that featured positive visual representations of female athletes does not reveal a strict or consistent correlation between image size and the type of positive framing. While larger images – those covering half or more of the article space – were somewhat more likely to combine multiple symbolic elements such as leadership and talent, similar forms of positive portrayal (e.g., celebrating achievements or highlighting skills) were also found in articles with smaller visuals. This suggests that, in the Bulgarian context, positive framing is not necessarily dependent on the visual prominence of the image. What stands out most clearly is that emphasizing leadership and positive presence and highlighting talent development and skill(s) remained the most frequently observed symbolic theme, reflecting a general editorial tendency to recognise and affirm the sporting accomplishments of Bulgarian female athletes, regardless of how prominently they are featured visually.

BG 2.7 Synthesis of the findings of the analysis of online sport media

The analysis of online sports media content in Bulgaria **reveals a landscape of both progress and persisting disparities in the representation of female athletes**. Female athletes were mentioned in 19 out of the 20 analysed publication dates (95%), indicating that women are not entirely excluded from online sports coverage. Across the full sample of 59 articles examined in detail, positive framing dominated – appearing in 44 cases (75%) and focusing on achievement, leadership, talent development, or personal inspiration. Visual representation was consistently present, with every article including at least one image, though most featured only a single photo. Larger visuals were slightly more likely to include multifaceted positive portrayals, yet empowering framing was also common in smaller image formats, suggesting that positive tone does not depend solely on visual prominence.

Despite these strengths, **male athletes still received significantly more coverage in both number and depth, with each publication date examined containing over eight articles focused on men, compared to a lower and less consistent number for women**. While overt sexism or discriminatory language was rare, subtle stereotypes, trivialisation, and objectifying elements appeared in a small number of cases, and 13 articles were framed neutrally, with only 2 articles (3.4%) showing negative portrayals. Overall, the Bulgarian sports media shows a clear tendency toward more inclusive and respectful coverage of female athletes, yet structural imbalances in editorial priorities and media visibility continue to reinforce gender inequality in sport.

BG3. Social media: X profiles analysis

This section analyses the presence and representation of female athletes in posts published on Bulgarian profiles on the platform X (formerly Twitter), within the framework of the POWER project. This stage seeks to understand how institutional and individual profiles within the sports sector contribute (or not) to the visibility of women in the digital space, with particular focus on X, one of the most widely used social media platforms by federations, clubs, journalists, and athletes for the dissemination of real-time sports content. However, in the Bulgarian context, X is not a widely used platform – especially not for sports-related content – which directly affects the reach and activity levels of local accounts. As a result, while the profiles analysed have a relatively modest follower base (under 50,000), they still represent some of the most active and prominent Bulgarian accounts available on the platform.

The analysis focuses on a single day randomly selected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for a punctual yet revealing examination of gender dynamics within the posts. Data collection followed a common protocol established by the POWER project, considering Bulgarian profiles with relevant activity on the platform. Two media profiles with a high number of followers were analysed: one specialising in sport (*Gong_Bg*) and the other a generalist (*SegaBG*).

BG3.1. Number of analysed posts per X Profile

Table 22 presents the distribution of the 60 analysed posts in the Bulgarian case study, according to the institutional X (formerly Twitter) profile from which they originated. Two high-follower national profiles were included: *Gong_bg*, a sport-specialised news outlet, and *SegaBG*, a generalist newspaper.

Table 22 Distribution of the article per X profile

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised account?	Number of posts	Percentage
Gong_Bg	Yes	30	50%
SegaBG	No	30	50%
Total		60	100%

As shown in Table 22, the sample includes a relatively balanced number of posts from both profiles, enabling a comparative analysis between a sport-focused and a general news outlet. For the case of *Gong_Bg* it is obvious that there were articles related to sports since it is a pure sport profile. However, the significant inclusion of *SegaBG* allows for an assessment of how women's sports are represented outside specialised contexts.

BG3.2. Period of the data collection

The distribution of the 60 X posts by their month of publication is presented in the following table. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 23 Distribution of the X posts per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	6	10%
July/24	8	13,33%
August/24	8	13,33%
September/24	6	10%
October/24	8	13,33%
November/24	6	10%
December/24	6	10%
January/25	6	10%
February/25	6	10%

As Table 23 shows, The X posts analysed are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in July and August 2024 (26.67%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to the Olympic Games. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

The table below shows the distribution of the 60 X posts according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 24 Distribution of the X posts per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	10%
Tuesday	12	20%
Wednesday	6	10%
Thursday	6	10%
Friday	14	23.33%
Saturday	6	10%
Sunday	10	16.67%
Total	60	100%

As per Table 24, there is a noticeable concentration of posts published on Fridays (25.4%), possibly reflecting editorial routines related to end of the work week sports reporting.

BG 3.3. Number of X posts dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of posts on platform X dedicated to male and female athletes on the days when data were collected.

Table 25 Mention of athletes on the X accounts

Do the X posts mention athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
No	2	3.33%
Yes - only males	28	46.67%
Yes - only females	8	13.33%
Yes - both	22	36.67%
Total	60	100%

Table 25 shows that out of the 60 analysed days of publication on Bulgarian X accounts, only 2 dates made no mention of any athletes at all. However, nearly half of the publication dates (28) focused exclusively on male athletes, while only 8 dates mentioned only female athletes, highlighting a clear gender disparity. Dates that included both male and female athletes accounted for 22 entries, suggesting that mixed-gender representation exists but remains secondary to male-only visibility. Overall, the data reinforces the trend of male dominance in Bulgarian sports media content on X, with women still occupying a marginal space.

Table 26 provides some insights into female athletes' representation in these X posts. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of days covered with no mention of female athletes is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility within the sports media landscape.

Table 26 Mention of female athletes in the X posts

Do the X posts mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	50%
No	30	50%
Total	60	100%

As per Table 26, 30 days (50%) mentioned female athletes, which is a high ratio.

Table 27 Number of posts dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	10	30
One	17	18
Between 2 and 4	29	12
Between 5 and 8	4	0
More than 8	0	0

In the Bulgarian case study, a total of 60 days' publications were analysed, distributed across nine months. Although 30 posts (50%) mentioned female athletes in some way, a closer look at the data reveals a much deeper gender imbalance in the level of attention each gender received.

According to Table 27, 30 out of 60 publication dates included no reference to female athletes at all, while only 10 publication days failed to mention male athletes. Among the publication days that did mention female athletes, the majority (18) included just one X post, and 12 days included between 2 and 4 posts on female athletes. Crucially, none of the publication dates included more than 4 female athlete mentions. This shows that even when women are included, their presence tends to be limited.

In contrast, male athletes were far more present and visible. 29 publication days included between 2 and 4 posts focused on male athletes, and another 4 days included between 5 and 8 male athlete references. While none of the publication days featured more than 8 X posts on male athletes, the overall volume and recurrence of male athlete mentions was significantly higher.

These findings point to an ongoing issue in the Bulgarian digital sports media: the underrepresentation and marginal visibility of female athletes, even in posts that technically include them. This kind of symbolic inclusion – where women are present but in minimal or peripheral ways – can contribute to the wider marginalisation of women in sports. It impacts not only public recognition but also opportunities for sponsorships and broader support.

BG 3.4. Analysis of female athletes' X posts

Out of the full set of observations, 30 posts were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the X posts from Bulgarian profiles (i.e., *Gong_bg* and *SegaBG*). These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Table 28 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Bulgaria (n=30)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	7	23%
	Individual sports	23	77%
	Mixed (team and individual sports)	0	-
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	14	46%

	Olympic	16	53%
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As shown in Table 28, out of the 30 posts mentioning female athletes on Bulgarian X profiles, individual sports dominated the coverage, accounting for 77% of the cases, while team sports appeared in only 23%. This suggests a media tendency to focus more on personal athletic achievements, which are more easily highlighted in individual disciplines. Regarding competitive level, over half of the featured athletes (53%) were Olympic-level competitors, and 46% were professional athletes. Importantly, no grassroots or amateur female athletes were mentioned at all, revealing a clear gap in media visibility for women at the lower levels of sport. This lack of representation reinforces the idea that Bulgarian sports media tends to spotlight elite women athletes, leaving the broader female sports community largely overlooked in the digital space.

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of the specialised X profile, *Gong_bg*, and non-specialised X profile, *SegaBG*. While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Bulgarian sports media, they are aligned with patterns identified in previous research: a tendency to marginalise female athletes, especially outside of major events or disciplines perceived as traditionally feminine.

BG 3.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X posts

Out of the 30 posts that mentioned female athletes, the majority (60%) were framed in a neutral manner, neither overtly positive nor negative. A positive framing – where achievements, talent, or admirable qualities were emphasised – was found in 11 posts (37%), while only one post (3%) had a clearly negative framing, linked to a sanction or disciplinary issue.

The low presence of negative or sexist content might suggest a positive shift in how women athletes are portrayed in Bulgarian digital sports media, particularly on X. Still, given the limited size of the sample, these findings should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, the dominance of neutral framing may indicate a lack of narrative depth or interest, rather than truly balanced reporting – suggesting that women athletes are often mentioned without meaningful storytelling or recognition, which is another form of marginalisation.

Table 29 Framing of female athletes

How female athletes are framed in the posts	Number of posts	Percentage
Positive Framing	11	37%
Negative Framing	1	3%
Neutral framing (neither positive, nor negative)	18	60%

As concerns the post which frame women athletes positively, these were conveyed through highlighting talent development and skills, sharing inspiring personal stories, emphasising

leadership and positive presence, celebrating achievements and records. Such representations point towards **a tendency to value the role and accomplishments of women when they are made visible in sports media discourse.**

Positive Framing of Female Athletes on Bulgarian X profiles
(n=11)

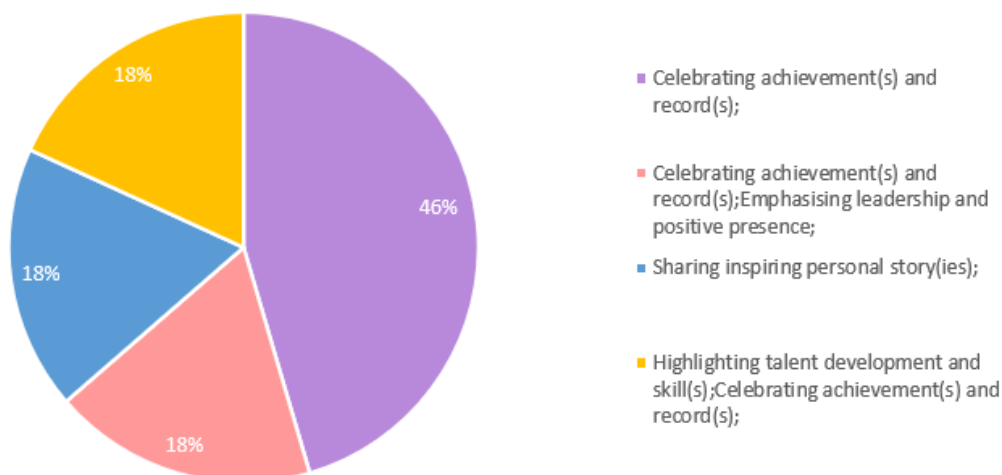


Figure 14 Categorisation of positive framing text

Although these findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of the Bulgarian sports media landscape, they provide an indicative picture of how female athletes are represented in the analysed X profiles. **The low incidence of negative stereotypes or objectification, combined with the frequency of positive portrayals, may serve as an important indicator.**

BG 3.5. Presence and number of images in the X posts

Of the 30 X posts that mentioned female athletes, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 4 posts (13.33%) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete(s), while 26 posts (86.67%) did not feature any image. **This reveals a significant lack of visual representation of female athletes in X posts within the Bulgarian context.** As a result, the visibility of women athletes is reduced. Without the use of images, athlete recognition and audience familiarity are not enhanced, and user interaction with the content tends to be lower.

Ultimately, **the absence of imagery highlights that female athletes are still not given the same level of promotional attention as their male counterparts.** It is important to note that these findings refer to a limited sample of Bulgarian profiles analysed within the present study and should not be generalised to the entire digital sports media landscape.

BG 3. 5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X post's images

Among the 4 X posts with images mentioning female athletes, no cases of sexualisation, objectification, gender stereotypes or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visual representations.

Positive Framing of Female Athletes on Bulgarian X profiles (n=4)

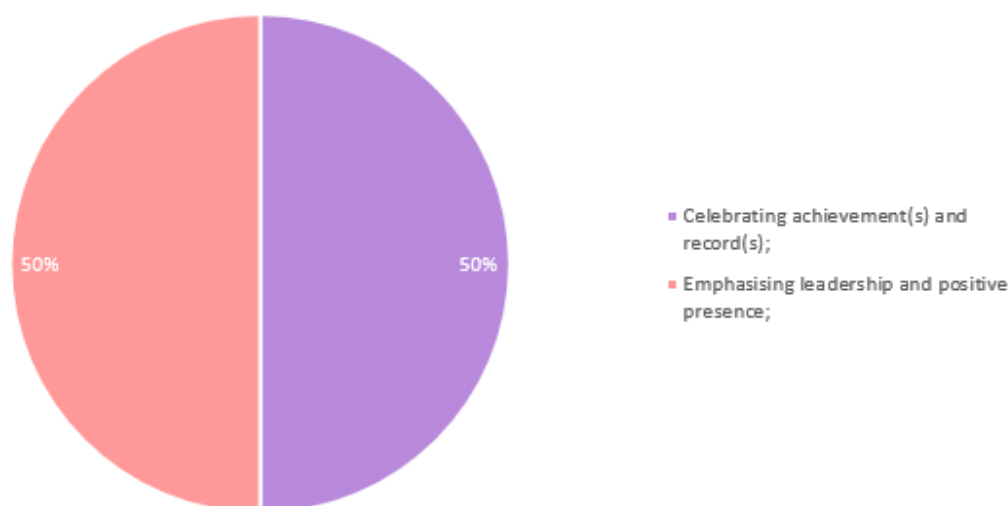


Figure 15 Categorisation of the positive framing images

Although the sample analysed is limited, the absence of sexist representations and the prevalence of affirmative visual narratives may indicate a more respectful and constructive approach in the digital coverage examined.

BG 3.6. Synthesis of the findings of social media posts

The analysis of Bulgarian profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project, offers valuable insights into the digital representation of female athletes. **The findings highlight a slight gender imbalance in sports coverage, with 30 posts (50%) not mentioning female athletes at all.** It is important to note that 10 posts (16.67%) did not contain any mention of male athletes either. These patterns are like those identified elsewhere in this study: the slight dominance of male athletes' presentation in Bulgarian media outlets.

Despite this imbalance, **the tone and content (both textual and visual) of the posts barely showed no explicit examples of sexist language and barely any instances of objectification or sexualisation.** Furthermore, the majority of these posts kept a neutral tone or featured positive framing of the athlete. This suggests that, when included, female athletes tend to be portrayed with dignity and merit.

However, these findings should be interpreted considering the analysis's limitations. The sample is small (N = 60) and is based on only two media profiles, which do not fully reflect the

editorial strategies of these outlets or the broader complexities of gender representation in Bulgarian sports media. Additionally, the limited number of posts restricts the possibility of conducting inferential statistical analyses. While it is possible to identify descriptive trends, the sample is not sufficiently robust to support generalisations or statistically valid hypothesis testing.

Finally, the data suggest **that female athletes remain underrepresented in the Bulgarian digital sports media landscape, even on platforms like X that offer opportunities for more immediate and inclusive content dissemination. Future research with larger samples, a broader range of profiles (e.g., athletes, federations), and longer timeframes will be essential to confirm these trends and promote a more equitable visibility of women in Bulgarian sport.**



BG4. Online TV episode analysis

This analysis refers to the Bulgarian sample of online TV episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025, within the framework of the POWER project. The study examined the visibility and framing of female athletes in sports-related news segments broadcast by national TV channels.

BG4.1. Number of analysed episodes per TV channel

Table 30 presents the distribution of the 39 analysed episodes according to the TV channel of origin. The sample includes editions from two widely circulated national broadcasters: **BTV** and **Nova TV**. Both are generalist channels with regular sports coverage in their news bulletins.

Table 30 Distribution of the episodes per TV channel

TV Station	Number of Episodes	Percentage
BTV	20	51.3%
Nova TV	19	48.7%
Total	39	100%

The sample is relatively balanced across both channels, allowing a comparative analysis. BTV accounts for just over half of the sample (51.3%), suggesting slightly more frequent inclusion of this channel's episodes.

BG4.2. Period of Data Collection

The distribution of the 39 episodes by their month of broadcast is presented below. The analysis spans from June 2024 to February 2025, covering various seasons and news cycles.

Table 31 Distribution of the episodes by month

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	4	10.3%
July/24	4	10.3%
August/24	7	17.95%
September/24	4	10.3%
October/24	4	10.3%
November/24	4	10.3%
December/24	4	10.3%
January/25	4	10.3%
February/25	4	10.3%
Total	39	100%

As Table 31 shows, the distribution is well spread over the months. August 2024 had the highest concentration of coded episodes (17.95%), due to the Olympics, while all the other months had the same number of episodes.

BG 4.3. Distribution by weekday

Table 32 shows the distribution of episodes according to the weekday they were aired. This allows the identification of editorial routines or trends related to specific days.

Table 32 Distribution of the episodes by weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	8	21%
Tuesday	12	31%
Wednesday	6	15%
Thursday	4	10%
Friday	9	23%
Saturday	-	-
Sunday	-	-
Total	39	100%

The distribution of sports news coverage across the days of the week reveals some notable patterns. While most days feature consistent reporting, Tuesday stands out with the highest frequency, accounting for 31% of all coverage. This distribution suggests that while there is a balanced editorial approach, there may be a strategic emphasis on midweek coverage, possibly aligned with major sporting events, match schedules, or audience engagement trends.

BG 4.4. Analysis of female athletes' TV reports

Out of the entire sample of 39 TV episodes in Bulgaria, 25 episodes mentioned female athletes. These reports form the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in televised sports news.

Table 33 Characteristics of reports featuring female athletes

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the report sport-related?	Yes	16	64%
	No	9	36%
Type of sport featured	Team sport	5	20%
	Individual sport	20	80%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	9	36%
	Olympic	16	64%
	Grassroots	-	-

Table 33 shows that across 25 episodes, 64% featured sport-related reports on female athletes, with a strong emphasis on Olympic-level participation. Individual sports dominated coverage, appearing in 80% of episodes, while team sports were featured in 20%. Olympic-level athletes were represented in the majority of the episodes (64%), whereas professional athletes appeared in just 36%. Grassroots-level athletes were not featured at all. This once again suggests a **clear media focus on elite, individual female sports, with limited visibility for emerging or local-level talent.**

BG4.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes

None of the 25 reports trivialised the performance of female athletes, and there were no instances of gender stereotypes in the visuals. This may indicate a positive editorial evolution. Additionally, no report contained sexualised or objectifying imagery of female athletes.

On the contrary, all 25 reports (100%) framed the female athletes positively, mostly by celebrating achievements or highlighting performance.:

- 40% combined celebration of achievements with emphasizing leadership and positive presence;
- 24% put an emphasis on leadership or positive presence;
- 20% focused exclusively on achievement;
- 16% highlighted talent development and skills.

This suggests a growing effort to present female athletes in a multidimensional light, though performance remains the dominant lens. Notably, the inclusion of leadership and presence in some episodes marks a slight editorial expansion beyond traditional portrayals focused solely on athletic output.

BG4.4.2 Gender presence and airtime in TV sports reporting

Out of the 39 analysed episodes:

- All episodes (100%) – featured reports on male athletes;
- Only 25 episodes (64%) mentioned female athletes;

Across all episodes, the total estimated airtime for female athletes was approximately 33 minutes. This reflects a **slight imbalance in presence and editorial weight. While men were featured in every episode, women appeared in two-thirds, but even then, their coverage was often brief and isolated.**

BG 4.5. Synthesis of the findings of the online TV news

This analysis of 39 online TV news episodes aired by Bulgaria's two leading national broadcasters – BTV and Nova TV – between June 2024 and February 2025, offers valuable

insight into the visibility and framing of female athletes in televised sports reporting. Conducted as part of the POWER project, the study exposes a slight gender gap in representation, with all episodes (100%) featuring male athletes, while only two thirds (64%) included any reference to women. This disparity is further underscored by the estimated 33 minutes of total airtime dedicated to female athletes across the entire eight-month period—highlighting a persistent underrepresentation not so much in frequency, but in editorial weight.

Among the 25 episodes that did feature women, 92.3% included sport-related content, with a strong emphasis on **individual sports (80%)** and **Olympic-level athletes (64%)**. Professional athletes appeared in just 36% of episodes, while grassroots sports were entirely absent. This indicates a clear editorial preference for covering elite, high-profile individual female athletes. Team-sport athletes and those in developmental stages of their careers receive limited to no coverage, suggesting a missed opportunity to broaden the narrative around women in sport.

Importantly, the tone and framing of the reports that did include women were overwhelmingly positive. 25 out of 25 episodes (100%) portrayed female athletes in a favourable light, often celebrating their **achievements, talent, and positive presence**. Furthermore, there was an encouraging absence of sexualised or objectifying imagery, and no visual gender stereotypes were observed. These findings may point to a gradual shift in how female athletes are represented on screen, moving toward a more respectful and performance-focused portrayal.

In conclusion, while there are signs of editorial progress – especially in tone and the avoidance of overt stereotyping – the data make clear that women’s sports continue to be a peripheral concern in mainstream televised news. Representation is selective, often limited to elite professionals, and coverage remains both quantitatively and qualitatively narrower than that of male athletes. For genuine equity in sports media, there must be a more consistent and inclusive approach that elevates a broader spectrum of female athletic experiences, including grassroots, youth, and individual achievements, alongside professional and Olympic success stories.

BG5. Focus group analysis

BG 5.1. Details of the focus group organised in Bulgaria

Date: 17/4/2025

Place: Online – zoom meeting

Objectives: Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media, discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media

No of participants: 8

Profile of participants: see the table below

Table 34 Focus Group Participants – Profile Summary

Code	Gender	Professional Role / Affiliation	Relevant Background	Inclusion Category
P1	Male	Sport journalist in TV media	Covered multiple sports topics & sports events	Journalist
P2	Male	Journalist in online media	Covered sports topics; has his own sports podcast	Journalist
P3	Male	Editor in online media	Editorial work; covered multiple sports topics & sports events	Media professional
P4	Female	Radio commentator & sports journalist	Former female athlete and current journalist	Media professional
P5	Female	Content creator & sports online platform manager	Created her own online platform for covering sports events	Content creator
P6	Female	Rhythmic gymnastics trainer	Active in youth coaching (Grassroots level)	Female athlete
P7	Male	Grassroots football player	High-level sport & performance	Additional participant (Male athlete)
P8	Male	President of a sport organization	Active in youth coaching	Additional participant (Male athlete)

BG5.2. Thematic Analysis

Table 35 Thematic analysis from the Bulgarian focus group

Category: Inequality in media coverage		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Difference in coverage between male and female athletes	Half of the participants agreed that there is inequality in media coverage between men and women, with men receiving more attention.	P5, P6, P7, P8
	The other half of the participants agreed that there is no significant difference in media coverage between male and female athletes, at least in prominent media outlets. They emphasized that coverage depends more on success than gender.	P1, P2, P3, P4
Predominance of football and invisibility of other sports	There is consensus among the participants that Bulgarian sports media tends to focus on traditionally male-dominated sports like football, often neglecting female athletes unless they are in gymnastics, athletics, or win major international medals	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8
Difference in coverage is only due to the preferences of the audience	The Bulgarian audience is simply more interested in male-dominated sports, hence media outlets focus on that to generate views.	P2, P8
No coverage of women athletes in local media	Local media rarely recognize female athletes, especially those in non-mainstream sports.	P4
Category: Stereotypes and sexualization		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Quality of portrayal depending on the type of media	There are no stereotypical portrayals of female athletes in prominent media (i.e. national TV channels). On the other hand, sports websites and online platforms often count on sensationalism, focusing on more superficial or click-driven content.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8
Focus on appearance over achievements	Female athletes are often judged more for their appearance than their performance. Sexualization of female athletes is often observed, especially in online and commercial platforms, in order to attract more attention and increase viewership.	P2, P3, P7, P8



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Sexualization of female sports journalists	While female athletes may not frequently be the target of stereotypes or sexualisation, it is often female sports reporters and hosts in TV studios who face objectification – their presence seeming more focused on attracting viewers than on offering journalistic insight.	P1, P4, P7
Perceptions of entertainment value and biological assumptions	A recurring theme is the belief that women's sports are less entertaining, often justified by biological or performance-based stereotypes. This perception contributes to lower media interest and public engagement.	P8
Media Reinforcement of Stereotypes	Rather than challenging outdated beliefs, the media often mirrors them — framing women athletes through superficial narratives.	P5, P6
Category: Lack of focus on performance		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Public expectations strongly influence how female athletes are portrayed.	In the past, media shaped public opinion, but today, it's the public - especially online audiences - that shapes media content. And since the majority of the public is more attracted by sensationalism and less by athletic performance, this is what the media outlets focus on.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7,
Digital media's role on the quality of media coverage	Due to digitalization and the shift away from traditional media, outlets are focused on retaining attention rather than educating, which leads to more sensationalist and less balanced portrayals. This shift has weakened the media's role in shaping respectful and nuanced representation of female athletes.	P1, P3, P5
A concern equally relevant for both male and female athletes.	Male athletes are often in the media for scandals and personal stories as well, even more often than female athletes.	P1, P2, P7, P8
Category: Impact on athletes' careers		
Subcategories		
Increased participation and early engagement	Seeing women succeed in sports would encourage more girls to join clubs, academies, and teams early in life.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8
Better chances for attracting sponsorships and support	Strong and high-quality media coverage would be extremely beneficial for less popular athletes from smaller sports clubs who are just beginning to build their careers. At the moment, they receive little media attention, which significantly limits their chances of being noticed and gaining support.	P4, P5
Boosting confidence and ambition	Representation fosters belief and ambition in young girls. Media visibility motivates effort and inspires girls to see themselves as serious athletes.	P6



Shaping role models for future generations of athletes	When athletes become visible and relatable through meaningful life stories and professional journeys shared in the media, they can become role models who inspire future generations to grow, stay resilient, and aim higher in their athletic careers.	P3
Category: Sexist and gendered stereotypes		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Quantity vs. Quality of Coverage	While there is more coverage of women's sports today, the content often lacks depth or reinforces gender stereotypes — suggesting progress in volume, but not necessarily in substance.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8
Importance of Individual Journalistic Initiatives	Meaningful, respectful coverage of women athletes often stems from individual efforts rather than institutional policy, revealing a lack of systemic change.	P2, P3, P5
Category: Need for change		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Positive institutional shifts and visibility gains	There are clear improvements in how women athletes are represented — with greater visibility in national-level events, award ceremonies, news coverage, and online platforms. These developments show progress toward normalising the presence of women in sport.	P1, P3, P6, P8
Need for more meaningful storytelling in media coverage	Deeper focus on meaningful personal stories and athletic identity would increase the popularity and understanding of female athletes among the audience.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7
Role of individual and grassroots initiatives	Change is often driven by individual journalists. These efforts are key drivers of positive coverage and increased visibility.	P3
Emergence of online platforms, dedicated to gender-balanced sports coverage	Initiatives like <i>Sports Calendar</i> stand out as good examples of balanced and respectful media coverage, giving equal attention to all sports and to both male and female athletes.	P5



Category 1: Inequality in media coverage

Participants expressed different views on whether there is a significant difference in media coverage between male and female athletes. Some insisted that coverage is based more on success than gender, especially in prominent media outlets. Others clearly pointed out a disparity, highlighting that women athletes, unless they are in disciplines like gymnastics or win international medals, often remain invisible — particularly in local or regional media. There was, however, full consensus on the overrepresentation of traditionally male-dominated sports like football. This affects not only women's sports, but also fewer commercial disciplines in general. Some participants argued that this is not necessarily caused by media bias, but more by the preferences of the audience, which shape editorial decisions. Still, the result is the same: female athletes often receive less consistent, less visible, and less respectful media attention.

Implication: Without addressing the broader editorial focus and public interest bias, female athletes — especially those in grassroots or less visible sports — will continue to be underrepresented, missing important opportunities for recognition, sponsorship, and career development.

Category 2: Stereotypes and sexualization

Across all types of media — from national TV to digital platforms — participants noticed that female athletes are more often judged by their appearance than by their performance. Sensationalism is especially visible in online and commercial platforms, where sexualized content is often used to increase views and attention. Interestingly, participants stressed that female sports journalists also face this issue. Their presence in TV studios is sometimes framed more as visual attraction than professional contribution. In addition, the idea that women's sports are biologically less entertaining or intense is still present in public opinion, often reflected in media narratives. As a result, coverage fails to highlight the technical or strategic side of women's performance.

Implication: These stereotypes, whether aimed at athletes or journalists, reduce the credibility and seriousness of women in sports. They discourage young girls from seeing themselves in these roles, and they contribute to the ongoing gender gap in sport-related professions.

Category 3: Lack of focus on performance

Many participants agreed that current media narratives often miss the point when it comes to sport performance. Emotional stories, physical appearance, or personal struggles tend to dominate — rather than achievements, training routines, or strategic aspects of the sport. This shift is largely due to the evolution of digital media. In order to compete for attention, outlets are prioritizing click-based content over educational or performance-focused reporting. Media is now following the preferences of the audience more than leading them — resulting in superficial coverage that affects both female and male athletes.

Implication: Failing to focus on athletic merit weakens the image of women as capable, serious competitors. It limits their credibility in sport and reduces the chances of inspiring new generations of female athletes.

Category 4: Impact on athletes' careers

Participants agreed that media visibility plays a major role in shaping athletic careers. When women are underrepresented or portrayed through stereotypical lenses, it becomes harder for them to attract sponsors or recognition — especially at the beginning of their careers in smaller clubs or non-mainstream sports. At the same time, good representation can do the opposite. When girls see female athletes in the media, it boosts their self-confidence, motivation, and belief that they too can succeed. Media also has the power to create role models — especially when stories are shared not only about results, but also about personal development and growth.

Implication: Fair and inspiring media coverage is essential not only for career development, but also for activating early engagement of girls in sport. It builds ambition, opens doors, and contributes to long-term gender equality in the field.

Category 5: Sexist and gendered stereotypes

Although the quantity of media coverage of women's sport has improved slightly, the quality often remains problematic. Participants noted that many articles and reports still include sexist narratives — showing women as emotional, dramatic, or visually pleasing rather than technically skilled. These patterns are more common among older or less-trained media professionals, and often reflect broader societal biases. In contrast, more respectful and balanced coverage tends to come from individual initiatives — such as younger journalists, new platforms, or female professionals who are pushing for change.

Implication: Without more systemic change and institutional support, progress will remain slow. Training for media professionals and editorial guidelines focused on gender equality are key to breaking these patterns.

Category 6: Need for change in representation

Despite all challenges, there are clear signs of positive change. Participants mentioned that women athletes now receive more visibility during national events, award ceremonies, and through emerging digital platforms. Initiatives like Sports Calendar were highlighted as good examples of fair and inclusive coverage that treats all sports — and all athletes — with equal respect. However, many of these efforts are still individual rather than structural. Participants stressed the need for more meaningful storytelling — highlighting personal journeys, challenges, and identity — not just results. This could help increase public interest and normalize the presence of women in all areas of sport.

Implication: Change must go beyond isolated efforts. Media organizations should invest in inclusive editorial strategies, support gender-balanced platforms, and give space to diverse

stories. These steps are essential to create long-lasting cultural shifts, both in sport and in society.

BG5.3. Word clount analysis

To complement the thematic analysis, we created a word cloud based on the frequency of terms mentioned across participants' contributions in the focus group. Proper names, prepositions, and adverbs were excluded to focus only on meaningful content words. The final list was refined to include only terms that aligned with the six thematic categories established in our analytical framework. This visual representation offers an intuitive overview of the key ideas and concerns discussed, with the most frequently mentioned terms appearing in larger font sizes.



Figure 16 Word cloud from the thematic analysis

Synthesis of the findings - BULGARIA

The cross-platform analysis of Bulgarian sports media reveals **persistent gender imbalances in the visibility and representation of female athletes**. While there are encouraging developments—particularly a generally respectful tone in coverage and the presence of some dedicated online initiatives—these improvements remain fragmented, inconsistent, and insufficient to ensure equal media representation.

Across newspapers, online platforms, X (formerly Twitter), and television, **women athletes are consistently underrepresented in both frequency and prominence**. Coverage is often concentrated around elite performers, especially those competing in individual Olympic sports such as rhythmic gymnastics, athletics, or tennis, and is largely absent for grassroots or amateur athletes. In local media, female athletes outside of traditionally “feminine” sports remain almost invisible.

Print media shows sporadic mentions of women, with content heavily dominated by men’s sports, particularly football. Positive tone is common, but articles about women tend to be short, visually secondary, and limited to high-profile events. Sexist language and overt stereotyping are rare but not eliminated.

Online sports platforms perform better in consistently including female athletes, but the depth of coverage still favours men. The focus is often tied to event-based peaks (e.g., the Olympics) rather than sustained reporting. Visual framing is inconsistent, with many stories lacking impactful imagery. Commercial and click-driven logic continues to encourage superficial portrayals, especially on high-traffic sites, while alternative online outlets demonstrate that balanced and engaging coverage is possible.

X posts show symbolic inclusion: just over half mention women athletes, yet **nearly two-thirds of these posts contain no images**. Positive framing dominates, but the lack of visual support and minimal follow-up reporting limits the potential to build public recognition.

Television coverage exhibits the strongest imbalance. Female athletes appear infrequently, receive minimal airtime, and are rarely featured outside elite contexts. When present, framing focuses on performance and leadership but without thematic depth or continuity.

Focus group discussions **reinforce these findings**. Media professionals, journalists, and athletes agree that Bulgarian sports coverage is heavily shaped by audience demand for male-dominated sports and click-driven editorial priorities. Participants identified persistent stereotypes—such as the focus on women’s appearance or assumptions about entertainment value—that still influence coverage, particularly in digital and commercial spaces. The sexualization and objectification of female sports journalists in television studios emerged as a distinct but related concern.

Participants also stressed the impact of visibility on careers: meaningful and consistent coverage could increase sponsorship opportunities, inspire young girls to engage in sport, and help build role models for future generations. They emphasized that positive changes—such as better national television storytelling and emerging gender-balanced online platforms—are often the result of individual journalist initiative rather than systemic reform.

Overall, the Bulgarian media landscape is at a transitional stage: tone and isolated examples of good practice are improving, but structural inequalities remain entrenched in editorial choices, resource allocation, and narrative diversity. Progress will require coordinated action—training for sports journalists, editorial and institutional commitments to gender equity, and the promotion of alternative and grassroots voices to diversify sports storytelling.



“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Greece



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Introduction

In Greece, the sporting landscape remains deeply gender-imbalanced, both in terms of participation and representation. Although recent decades have witnessed gradual improvements in female engagement—particularly in grassroots participation and elite-level competition—leadership roles and media visibility remain overwhelmingly male-dominated. Structural barriers, such as limited access to resources, persistent stereotypes, and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, continue to shape the dynamics of sport in the country. In Greece, limited policy enforcement on gender equality in sport and the concentration of sports media ownership exacerbate the problem, allowing stereotypical narratives to persist largely unchallenged. This gender gap is particularly evident in sports media, where female athletes receive considerably less coverage than their male counterparts.

GR1. Newspaper Analysis

This initial analysis refers to the newspapers under review. A sample of 78 newspaper editions published in Greece between June 2024 and February 2025 was analysed, with data collection taking place between February and April 2025.

GR1.1. Number of analysed editions per newspaper

The table below presents the distribution of the 78 newspaper editions analysed in the Greek case study, according to the newspaper of origin. Editions from four widely circulated national publications were included: **Demokratia**, **Ta Nea** (general news newspapers), **Fos ton Spor** and **Livesport** (sport-related newspapers).

Table 36 Number of analysed editions per newspaper

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of the newspaper editions	Percentage
Demokratia	No	19	24.36%
Ta Nea	No	19	24.36%
Livesport	Yes	20	25.64%
Fos Ton Spor	Yes	20	25.64%
Total		78	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of newspaper editions from all four publications, enabling a comparative analysis between editorial profiles. The significant inclusion of generalist newspapers is crucial to understanding how sport — particularly women's sport — is portrayed in non-specialised media.

GR1.2. Period of the data collection

Table 37 presents the distribution of the 78 newspaper editions by their month of publication. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 37 Distribution of the newspaper editions per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
Jun/24	11	14.10%
Jul/24	7	8.97%
Aug/24	8	10.26%
Sep/24	8	10.26%
Oct/24	8	10.26%
Nov/24	8	10.26%
Dec/24	12	15.38%
Jan/25	8	10.26%
Feb/25	8	10.26%
Total	78	100%

The articles are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in June 2024 (14.10%) and December 2024 (15.38%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to major events or pre-Olympic preparations. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 38 shows the distribution of the 78 newspaper editions according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 38 Distribution of the newspaper editions per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	16	20.51%
Tuesday	11	14.10%
Wednesday	4	5.13%
Thursday	12	15.38%
Friday	12	15.38%
Saturday	11	14.10%
Sunday	12	15.38%
Total	78	100%

The data shows that newspapers are most frequently shown on Mondays, with around 20.51%. Wednesdays have the lowest percentage at about 5.06%, possibly due to a midweek slowdown in publication activity. The distribution remains relatively steady on weekends and other

weekdays like Thursday and Friday, each accounting for approximately 15.38%, indicating a consistent publishing pattern throughout these days.

GR1.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per newspaper edition. The data are grouped into ranges based on the observed volume of coverage. The table below indicates whether each of the 78 analysed editions included any mention of female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no).

Table 39 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	54	69.23%
No	24	30.77%
Total	78	100%

The data shows that 69.23% of the editions mention female athletes, while 30.77% do not.

This suggests a generally positive level of inclusion, though the one-third of the editions still lack any reference to female athletes — highlighting room for improvement in achieving more balanced gender representation in sports coverage. The qualitative characteristics of approximately 70% of this are covered in the following segments.

Table 40 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	2	24
One	-	15
Between 2 and 4	2	22
Between 5 and 8	3	12
More than 8	71	5
Total (valid responses)	78	

The data reinforces a stark gender disparity in sports media coverage. Male athletes dominated the spotlight, with 91% of editions featuring more than eight articles about them and 97.4% including at least some male representation. In contrast, female athletes were entirely absent in 30.8% of editions, and 50% had either no coverage or just one article. Only 6.4% of editions included more than eight articles on women, compared to 91% for men.

This imbalance underscores the marginal visibility of female athletes and highlights a persistent gap in the depth and consistency of their representation in sports journalism. The stark gender disparity in sports media coverage may stem from a mix of historical bias, commercial interests, and cultural norms that prioritize men's sports. Media outlets often

focus on male athletes due to higher viewership and advertising revenue, while underinvestment in women's sports limits their visibility—an issue also confirmed by participants in a focus group conducted in Greece regarding the portrayal of women athletes in the media. The focus group's responses will be given in the relevant segment.

GR 1.3.1. Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes in Greece

On average, each edition included 8.52 articles about male athletes ($SD = 1.75$). This result was statistically significant ($t(77) = 43.09$, $p < .001$), with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 4.88$), indicating consistent and intense visibility of male athletes in Greek sports journalism. By contrast, each edition included only 2.63 articles about female athletes on average ($SD = 2.75$). This result was also statistically significant ($t(77) = 8.45$, $p < .001$), but the effect size was moderate to large (Cohen's $d = 0.96$), pointing to less consistent and more fragmented representation.

Table 41 Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes

Gender	Mean articles per edition	SD	<i>t</i> value	<i>p</i> (two-tailed)	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Male	8.52	1.75	43.09	< .001	4.88
Female	2.63	2.75	8.45	< .001	0.96

The analysis shows that Greek sports media overwhelmingly prioritizes male athletes, both in the volume and consistency of coverage they receive. Female athletes are not entirely absent from the media landscape, but their representation remains limited, sporadic, and far less prominent.

This consistent disparity points to a systemic imbalance in how gender is portrayed in sports journalism. Such unequal visibility not only shapes public perception but may also reinforce gender stereotypes and contribute to the ongoing under-recognition of women's achievements in sport.

GR1.4. Analysis of female athletes' editions

Out of the entire sample, 54 newspaper editions were identified in Greece that included any mention of female athletes. These editions constitute the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in sports journalism. The following section examines various aspects of these 54 editions.

Table 42 Characteristics of editions featuring female athletes in Greece

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Number of editions	Total editions	54	100%

Is the article sport-related?	Yes	52	96.3%
	No	5	9.3%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	42	77.8%
	Individual sports	35	64.8%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	41	75.9%
	Olympic	24	44.4%
	Grassroots	8	14.8%

Out of the 54 newspaper editions analysed, 96.3% included sport-related articles featuring female athletes, confirming that women's visibility in print media is predominantly tied to their athletic performance. Only 5 editions (9.3%) featured non-sport articles, often placing athletes in lifestyle or cultural contexts. Team sports appeared in 77.8% of editions, slightly more than individual sports at 64.8%, suggesting a media preference for collective, mainstream competitions. Coverage focused largely on high-level athletes, with professional and Olympic competitors featured in 75.9% and 44.4% of editions respectively. In contrast, grassroots athletes appeared in just 14.8% of editions, indicating limited attention to non-elite levels of women's sport.

Table 43 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Greece

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Number of articles	Total articles	211	100%
Is the article sport-related?	Yes	206	97.6%
	No	5	2.4%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	134	63.5%
	Individual sports	77	36.5%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	147	69.7%
	Olympic	52	24.6%
	Grassroots	12	5.7%

Out of 211 articles featuring female athletes, the vast majority (97.6%) were sport-related, underscoring the media's focus on women's athletic achievements. Only 2.4% of articles presented female athletes outside of sport, often highlighting lifestyle or social themes. Within sport-related coverage, team sports were the focus in 63.5% of articles, surpassing individual sports at 36.5%. Professional athletes dominated the narrative, appearing in nearly 70% of articles, while Olympic athletes accounted for about a quarter. Grassroots-level athletes were minimally covered, appearing in less than 6% of articles, indicating a gap in media attention for non-elite women's sport.

GR1.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

In the Greek dataset, out of 54 newspaper editions mentioning women athletes, sexist language was identified in four editions with female athletes framed sensationally, described in secondary roles to men, or linked to traditional gender expectations. Gender stereotypes appeared in five editions—the same four plus one—often portraying women as emotionally driven, less authoritative, or reinforcing conventional roles.

This reveals that while female athletes are mentioned in several newspaper editions, a notable portion still employs sexist language and reinforces gender stereotypes. Although these instances are not widespread, they highlight ongoing challenges in achieving fair and unbiased media representation for women in sports. Addressing these issues is essential for promoting gender equality and more respectful portrayals of female athletes.

GR1.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

Among the 54 editions analysed, 39 editions (72.2%) included positive framing of female athletes. Of these, 15 editions (38.5%) combined celebration of achievements, recognition of talent, and leadership attributes. A further 12 editions (30.8%) highlighted both celebration and talent, while 6 editions (15.4%) focused solely on celebrating achievements. Leadership alone appeared in 4 editions (10.3%), and the remaining 2 editions (5.1%) featured other combinations, such as inspiring personal stories with leadership or exclusive emphasis on talent.

At the article level, out of 211 articles analysed, 170 articles (80.6%) demonstrated positive framing. Within these, 68 articles (40.0%) combined celebration of achievements, talent recognition, and leadership attributes; 43 articles (25.3%) highlighted celebration and talent; 26 articles (15.3%) focused solely on celebrating achievements. Leadership alone was emphasised in 17 articles (10.0%), while 16 articles (9.4%) involved other positive combinations, including inspiring personal stories with leadership or exclusive emphasis on talent.

In contrast, 8 editions (14.8%) contained negative framing, with 5 editions (62.5%) focusing on failures and disciplinary issues, 2 editions (25.0%) emphasising injuries or physical limitations, and 1 edition (12.5%) displaying sexist language and gender stereotypes alongside negative narratives.

Meanwhile, 31 articles (14.7%) contained negative framing, where 19 articles (61.3%) focused on failures, sanctions, or disciplinary issues; 9 articles (29.0%) highlighted injuries or physical limitations; and 3 articles (9.7%) incorporated sexist language and gender stereotypes along with negative framing.

Additionally, 7 editions (13.0%) were classified as neither positive nor negative in framing. These editions often included neutral reporting but sometimes contained subtle gender

stereotypes or assumptions. At the article level, 10 articles (4.7%) were similarly categorised as neither positive nor negative, reflecting more neutral narratives without clear evaluative language but occasionally presenting traditional gender roles or stereotypes.

Table 44 Categorisation of positive framing text

Categorisation of Positive Framing in Editions and Articles

Positive Framing Category	Editions (n = 39)	% of Editions	Articles (n = 170)	% of Articles
Celebration + Talent + Leadership	15	38.5%	68	40.0%
Celebration + Talent	12	30.8%	43	25.3%
Celebration only	6	15.4%	26	15.3%
Leadership only	4	10.3%	17	10.0%
Other combinations (e.g., talent only, inspiring stories with leadership)	2	5.1%	16	9.4%

These data indicate that **the recognition of performance and the attribution of positive traits such as talent, leadership, and inspiration are the most common forms of positive textual framing found in the articles from Greece.**

GR1.5. Presence and number of images in the editions & articles

Out of the 54 editions analysed, 39 editions (72.2%) contained articles featuring only one image of female athletes. Four editions (7.4%) included articles with up to two images, while three editions (5.6%) had articles showing up to three images. Lastly, two editions (3.7%) featured articles containing more than three images. This classification is based on the highest number of images found in any article within each edition, providing a clear overview of the visual presence of female athletes across editions.

Out of the 211 articles within these 54 editions, 116 articles ($\approx 55.0\%$) featured at least one image of the female athlete(s). In 48.8% of all articles (103 articles), there was only one image. In 3.3% (7 articles), two images were included. In 1.4% (3 articles), three images were included. In another 1.4% (3 articles), more than three images were used, indicating a more visually rich presentation.

Table 45 Number of Articles and Editions by Number of Images

Table: Number of Articles and Editions by Number of Images

Number of Images	Number of Articles	Number of Editions*
0 (no images)	95	11
1 image	103	39
2 images	7	4
3 images	3	3
More than 3 images	3	2
Total	211	54

Table 46 Size of the image

Percentages (out of 43 editions with images)

Photo Size	Number of Editions	Percentage (%)
Less than a quarter page	40	93.0%
A quarter of the page	3	7.0%
Larger than a quarter page	0	0.0%

Out of the 43 editions that include images, approximately 93% (40 editions) feature photos that occupy less than a quarter of the page, indicating a preference for relatively small image sizes in the coverage of female athletes. Only about 7% (3 editions) present images that take up a quarter of the page, and there were no editions with images larger than a quarter of the page. This suggests that visual representation, while present, tends to be modest in size within these editions.

GR1.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the image & negative framing

Among the 116 articles containing images of female athletes, 2 articles (1.72%) presented sexualisation or objectification, sensational framing, gender stereotypes, and trivialisation of performance. One of these 2 articles (0.86%) also included negative framing linked to sanctions or disciplinary issues. The remaining 114 articles (98.28%) visually framed female athletes in a positive or neutral light.

Among the 43 editions containing images of female athletes, 2 editions (4.65%) presented sexualisation, objectification, sensational framing, gender stereotypes, or trivialisation of performance in the visuals—one of which also displayed negative framing linked to sanctions or disciplinary issues. The remaining 41 editions (95.35%) visually framed female athletes in a positive or neutral light.

GR1.5.2. Positive framing in the images

Table 47 Categorisation of positive framing images

Positive Framing Category/Combination	Percentage (%)
Celebrating achievement(s)	64.9
Highlighting talent development	70.3
Emphasising leadership	37.8
Sharing inspiring personal story	16.2
Celebrating achievement + Highlighting talent	45.9
Celebrating achievement + Emphasising leadership	21.6
Highlighting talent + Emphasising leadership	27.0
Celebrating achievement + Sharing inspiring story	16.2
Highlighting talent + Sharing inspiring story	16.2
Emphasising leadership + Sharing inspiring story	10.8

Most editions with positive framing focused on highlighting talent development (70.3%) and celebrating achievements and records (64.9%), showing a strong emphasis on athletes' skills and successes. About 38% of the editions emphasized leadership and positive presence, while a smaller portion (16.2%) shared inspiring personal stories. Combinations of these categories were also common, especially the pairing of celebrating achievements with highlighting talent (45.9%), indicating that many editions combined these positive themes to present a well-rounded portrayal of female athletes.

With the aim of deepening the qualitative analysis of the positive visual representations of female athletes, a bipartite network visualisation was created using Gephi software (version 0.10.1). Headlines are used here solely as identifiers for the editions, but all categories and connections in the network are based exclusively on the positive framing observed in the images. The network was constructed by cross-referencing images from newspaper editions with the previously coded categories of positive framing, such as:

- Celebrating achievements and records
- Highlighting talent development
- Leadership and positive presence
- Inspiring personal stories

For this purpose, the network nodes were organised into two distinct types:

1. Headlines from editions where positive framing was identified.
2. Thematic categories of symbolic framing.

The edges in the network represent the presence of a specific category within the images from a given edition. The data were organised into two spreadsheets — one for nodes and one for edges — and imported into Gephi. The ForceAtlas 2 layout algorithm was applied, given its suitability for visualising community-based structures. The colour and size of nodes were adjusted to differentiate categories (blue) from edition headlines (pink) & represent the relative centrality of nodes based on the number of connections. This approach enabled a clear mapping of symbolic relationships between visual framing in images and the editorial discourse on female athletes in the Greek press.

Transparency statement: The following headlines are illustrative examples based on the actual themes identified in the analysed editions. They are not verbatim headlines from the media, but were constructed to reflect the framing categories observed during the coding process.

Table 9: Code, Categories and Headlines

Code	Category and Headlines
C1	Leadership and positive presence
C2	Highlighting talent development; Leadership and positive presence
C3	Inspiring personal story; Leadership and positive presence
C4	Highlighting talent development
C5	Celebrating achievement and records
C6	Celebrating achievement and records; Highlighting talent development; Leadership and positive presence
H1	“We broke the wall”: Water polo team qualifies for Olympics
H2	Greek sprinter wins gold at European championships
H3	Volleyball captain leads comeback in final
H4	Veteran basketball star retires after 20-year career
H5	From injury to triumph: the return of a national gymnast

Key Findings from the Network Analysis

Thematic centrality: The category Celebrating achievements and records emerged as the most connected node, appearing in a majority of positively framed images. This points to a performance-based narrative as the dominant form of symbolic appreciation for female athletes in the Greek press.

Category co-occurrence: Highlighting talent development and Leadership and positive presence often appeared together in image framing, forming thematic clusters that present athletes as role models and symbols of excellence.

Headline complexity: Several editions linked a single headline/image to multiple categories, reflecting a multi-dimensional positive framing approach. For example, visual coverage of Olympic qualification or career milestones often combined celebration, leadership, and talent recognition.

Semantic specificity: Some images were linked to only one category — particularly Highlighting talent development — suggesting more targeted symbolic messaging, especially in emerging talent or youth sport contexts.

Visual clustering: The network revealed distinct clusters of headlines grouped by thematic category, reinforcing the finding that certain positive framings are applied consistently and systematically in Greek newspaper images.

Editions featuring images that take up a quarter of the page or more consistently use positive framing to portray female athletes, with 100% of these editions showing positive representation. In contrast, editions with smaller images (less than a quarter of the page) show more variation: while 75% still use positive framing, there are also instances of neutral, mixed, and negative framing. **This suggests that larger image sizes are more likely to be associated with positive portrayals, highlighting the importance of visual prominence in shaping perceptions of female athletes.**

Table 48 Image size, positive and negative framing of female athletes

Positive framing only	30	75%	3	100%
Neither positive nor neg	4	10%	0	0%
Both positive & neither	4	10%	0	0%
Negative framing only	2	5%	0	0%

GR1.6 Final synthesis of findings of newspaper's analysis

The findings from the Greek newspapers clearly highlight a persistent gender disparity in sports media coverage. Despite occasional positive framing and visual portrayals that celebrate female athletes' achievements, the volume, consistency, and visibility of such representations remain limited compared to male counterparts. Women athletes are significantly underrepresented both in the number of articles and in the size and prominence of imagery used. Moreover, while positive narratives do exist, instances of sexist language and stereotypes—though less frequent—continue to perpetuate outdated gender roles. Importantly, **grassroots female athletes receive minimal media attention, suggesting a disconnect between media visibility and the broader development of women's sports.** These

findings underscore the **urgent need for systemic media reforms and targeted policy actions to promote balanced gender representation in sports journalism, foster inclusivity, and empower future generations of female athletes in Greece.**

Although the sample-based analysis of the press indicated the **underrepresentation of female athletes, it did not reveal overt signs of sexism.** However, these findings **do not negate the problematic reality documented in numerous other studies and personal testimonies from female athletes and media professionals.** This discrepancy highlights the need for more extensive and systematic research, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, in order to more accurately capture the complex and multifaceted nature of women's representation in sports media.

More concrete results will be presented at the end of this report, following the analysis of focus groups, which will shed light on public perceptions of female athletes, existing stereotypes, and other relevant quantitative indicators.



GR2. Online publication date editions analysis (Sports magazines)

The sample of online sports publication date editions analysed in Greece comprises two specialised sports sites: **sdna.gr** and **gazzetta.gr**. The term “**sports magazines**” is intentionally avoided, as the analysis concerns **sports websites** and **articles published within these sites** over a specific date range, rather than periodical magazines. These platforms represent various segments within the broader sports media ecosystem, without focusing on specific sports. Considering that both platforms are sports news websites, the term 'edition' will refer to the publication date of an article. Each distinct publication date is counted as one edition per site. A total of 20 entries were collected from these outlets, covering publication dates between June 2024 and February 2025. The selected editions span various weekdays and reflect the diversity of editorial calendars across different online media. This sample provides insight into the visibility and representation of athletes—both male and female—within highly specialised sports journalism contexts in Greece.

GR2.1. Number of analysed editions per online sports site

The table below summarises the number of entries collected from each of the two online sports magazines. It reflects the total number of editions analysed per outlet, regardless of gender focus or athlete type:

Table 49 Distribution of the publication date editions per online site

Online Sports Sites	Number of the publication date editions	Percentage
sdna.gr	10	50%
gazzetta.gr	10	50%
Total	20	100%

A total of 20 publication date editions from online sports sites were analysed. These articles were evenly distributed between two major Greek sports news websites: **sdna.gr** and **gazzetta.gr**. Each platform contributed 10 publication date editions, accounting for 50% of the total sample. This equal distribution suggests a balanced representation of content from both sources, allowing for a fair comparison in any further analysis of themes, tone, or coverage style between the two outlets. The data also highlights the prominent role both **sdna.gr** and **gazzetta.gr** play in the online sports media landscape in Greece.

GR2.2. Period of the data collection

Tables 49 and 50 present the distribution of the 20 entries analysed from Greek online sports sites according to the month and day of publication. Data were collected between June 2024 and January 2025, offering a temporal snapshot across multiple seasons and editorial cycles.

Table 50 Distribution of the edition per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
Jun/24	2	10%
Jul/24	2	10%
Aug/24	4	20%
Sep/24	2	10%
Oct/24	2	10%
Nov/24	2	10%
Dec/24	2	10%
Jan/25	2	10%
Feb/25	2	10%
Total	20	100%

The above table indicates that the distribution of the 20 publication date editions spans from June 2024 to February 2025. Most months saw a steady output of 2 editions each (10%), except for August 2024, which had a notable peak with 4 editions (20%). **The increased frequency in August aligns with the 2024 Summer Olympics, suggesting that the heightened media interest and coverage of Olympic events drove a temporary surge in edition production. Aside from this peak, the consistent number of editions across other months indicates regular and ongoing sports reporting throughout the year.**

Table 51 Distribution of the publication edition per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	30%
Tuesday	-	-
Wednesday	4	20%
Thursday	4	20%
Friday	-	-
Saturday	2	10%
Sunday	4	20%
Total	20	100%

The highest number of editions appeared on Monday (30%), likely due to coverage of weekend sports events. Wednesday, Thursday, and Sunday each accounted for 20%, aligning with typical match days or event reporting. Saturday (10%) had fewer publications, and Tuesday and Friday had none, indicating those may be slower days for sports news production. This pattern reflects the rhythm of the sports calendar and how media outlets time their content to match audience interest.

GR2.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes per edition

This section compares the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per online Sports Magazine edition. The data were grouped into ranges based on the volume of coverage observed.

Table 52 indicates whether each of the 20 analysed publication date editions mentioned female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of editions without any mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility in online sports media.

Table 52 Mention of female athletes in the online sport sites

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	100%
No	-	
Total	20	100%

All 20 publication date editions (100%) included some mention of female athletes, indicating they were not excluded from sports coverage. **However, compared to male athletes, the coverage of women was significantly less prominent. While this suggests an effort toward inclusivity, the imbalance in representation shows that male athletes continue to receive the majority of attention. This points to a lingering gender disparity in sports journalism — a pattern that becomes even more evident as we will see below in the detailed analysis.**

The distribution of article counts dedicated to male and female athletes across the 20 editions is presented in the following table.

Table 53 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes per edition

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	-	-
One	-	1
Between 2 and 4	-	5
Between 5 and 8	-	7
More than 8	20	7
Total (valid responses)	20	

Based on the analysis of Greek digital sports media across 20 editions from two major outlets (sdna.gr and gazzetta.gr), the coverage of male athletes was consistently dominant. In every single edition, both outlets featured more than eight articles dedicated to male athletes. **This means 100% of the sample (20 out of 20 editions) provided high-volume male-focused sports content, highlighting a persistent prioritization of men's sports in editorial decisions. Such**

consistency demonstrates a deeply ingrained editorial trend favoring male athletes, offering them extensive visibility and attention in the digital sports landscape.

In contrast, female athletes were covered in every edition as well, but **the level of attention varied significantly**. While 7 publication date editions (35%) included more than eight articles on female athletes, another 7 editions featured a more modest number—between five and eight, and 5 editions between two and four articles. One edition had only a single article focused on female athletes. Notably, none of the editions had zero coverage of women, which marks a significant improvement.

Even though Greek sports media demonstrates consistent inclusion of female athletes, a clear gender imbalance persists. The vast majority of high-volume coverage continues to be reserved for male athletes. While the presence of women in all editions suggests progress toward visibility, the relatively lower frequency of substantial coverage indicates that parity in representation has not yet been achieved. **This analysis reinforces the broader pattern of gender disparity in sports journalism, albeit in a slightly more progressive context.**

GR2.4. Analysis of female athletes' editions

From the 20 publication date editions examined across two major Greek sports media outlets, female athletes were featured in a wide array of contexts, reflecting a broad and inclusive approach. Team sports were present in 95% of the editions (19 out of 20), demonstrating a strong focus on collective disciplines such as football, volleyball, and basketball. At the same time, individual sports appeared in 85% of the editions (17 out of 20), indicating that coverage extended beyond team-based events to recognize standout performances in solo disciplines as well.

In terms of competitive level, professional female athletes were covered in 95% of the editions, while Olympic-level athletes were featured in 70%. This high frequency shows **a strong editorial interest in elite women's sports and aligns with broader international trends that increasingly spotlight high-performance female athletes**. In comparison, amateur athletes were mentioned in 20% of the editions, which, although present, suggests a more limited focus on non-professional or developmental levels of sport.

Crucially, many publication date editions included overlapping elements, with articles often featuring athletes who fell into multiple categories—for example, a professional team athlete who also competed at the Olympic level, or editions that simultaneously covered both team and individual sports, as well as professional and Olympic athletes. This overlap reflects a more complex and layered representation of female athletes, showing that **Greek sports journalism often portrays women's participation in a multidimensional way rather than isolating them into singular, reductive categories.**

Table 54 Characteristics of editions featuring female athletes in Greece

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	19	95%
	Individual sports	17	85%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	4	20%
	Grassroots	-	-
	Professional	19	95%
	Olympic	14	70%

GR2.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

In the Greek sample of 20 publication date editions, the majority of articles featuring female athletes demonstrated a neutral or respectful tone, avoiding overtly discriminatory language. However, one edition included an instance where the performance of female athletes was trivialised, primarily through sensational framing that appeared to undermine the athletic merit of the achievement.

Additionally, gender stereotypes were identified in two editions, including the one in which trivialisation occurred. In one case, the edition reinforced traditional gender roles, portraying female athletes in ways that emphasized their appearance or domestic associations rather than their professional capabilities. In the other case, the narrative implied emotional vulnerability and assumed emotionalism, suggesting that the athlete's response to competition or performance was governed more by emotion than skill—an enduring stereotype often applied to women in sport.

Importantly, these instances were limited to a small fraction of the total sample (10%), and no editions contained explicit sexualisation, objectification, or overtly sexist terminology. Most content remained focused on the athletic aspect of female participation, without relying on reductive or stereotypical depictions. **This suggests that, while the Greek sports media generally avoids blatant gender bias in its language, subtle stereotypes and narrative framing still persist in isolated cases.**

GR2.4.2. Negative, neutral and positive framing in the text

In the sample of 20 publication date editions that featured female athletes in Greek online sports outlets, 4 editions (20%) exhibited elements of negative framing. In three of these cases, the focus was on athletic failure, while the remaining edition emphasized an injury. It is important to note that despite these negative frames, all four editions also included articles with either positive or neutral portrayals, indicating a mix of perspectives within the same date edition.

The positive framing of female athletes in the Greek sample reveals a **strong editorial trend toward empowerment and recognition**. Across the 20 analysed publication date editions, the

majority of articles presented female athletes through a lens of achievement, leadership, and skill development, reinforcing symbolic attributes commonly associated with competence and personal growth.

Out of the 20 analysed publication date editions, 19 (95%) featured positive framing of female athletes, often combining multiple symbolic elements within the same coverage. The most frequently observed category was highlighting talent development and skill(s), which appeared in 17 editions (85%). This was followed by celebrating achievements and record(s), present in 14 editions (70%), and emphasising leadership and positive presence, noted in 12 editions (60%). A smaller number of editions—3 in total (15%)—included content that focused on sharing inspiring personal story(ies). **These patterns suggest a strong editorial inclination toward affirmative and empowering portrayals when female athletes are featured in Greek digital sports outlets.**

In 6 editions (30%), positive framing appeared alongside neutral content, indicating a mixed but overall respectful tone. Only one edition (5%) featured neutral framing exclusively, without any clear symbolic or empowering elements.

Table 55: Positive framing of female athletes in Greek online Sports Editions

Table: Positive Framing of Female Athletes in Greek Online Sports Editions (n = 20)

Framing Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	17	85%
Celebrating achievements and record(s)	14	70%
Emphasising leadership and positive presence	12	60%
Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)	3	15%

Crucially, many editions included overlapping themes, where individual articles portrayed athletes as simultaneously skilled, accomplished, and inspirational. For instance, a single edition might celebrate a record-breaking performance while also underlining leadership qualities and personal resilience. This convergence of symbolic elements suggests a layered editorial approach, reflecting a more holistic and affirming portrayal of female athletes in Greek digital sports media.

GR2.5. Presence and number of images in the editions

All 20 editions in the Greek sample that featured female athletes included at least one image of the mentioned athletes, resulting in a 100% visual inclusion rate. This consistent presence suggests a clear editorial intention to visually represent female athletes whenever they are

covered in text. Among these 20 editions, 5 editions (25%) included more than three images of female athletes, indicating a stronger visual emphasis in a quarter of the cases. Additionally, 1 edition (5%) featured exactly three images. **These figures reflect a generally strong but varied level of visual representation. While the inclusion itself is consistent, the depth of coverage—measured by the number of images—varies, with a notable minority receiving more extensive visual attention.**

GR2.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the images

Among the 20 analysed publication date editions containing images of female athletes, 4 editions (20%) included instances of problematic visual representation. For example, in one edition (5%), there was a clear trivialisation of female athletes' performance through sensationalist framing, along with elements of sexualisation and objectification through inappropriate or unnecessary focus on their bodies. In another edition (5%), female athletes were portrayed negatively by emphasising injuries or physical limitations. Additionally, two editions (10%) featured gender-stereotypical imagery—one reinforcing traditional gender roles, and the other suggesting assumed emotionalism. **These findings suggest that while female athletes are visually represented, the quality of their portrayal in a notable minority of cases remains influenced by gender bias and reductive stereotypes.**

On the other hand, all editions included (100%) positive framing in visual representation, indicating a predominantly appreciative approach to portraying women in sport. The identified categories of positive framing reflect themes such as talent, leadership, success, and inspiring stories.

Table 56: Categorisation of positive framing images

Image Size	Negative Framing Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Less than ¼ page/article	Focus on injury	1	25%
¼ page/article	Traditional gender roles	1	25%
Half the article	Framing them sensationnally	1	25%
More than half the article	Framing them sensationnally	1	25%

Total editions with negative framing: 4

Percentages are per total editions with negative framing (4)

The analysis of 20 editions revealed a consistent use of positive framing in the visual depiction of female athletes. The most common narrative was celebrating achievements and records (80%), followed by highlighting talent and skill (60%) and emphasising leadership and positive presence (55%).

Notably, 30% of the editions featured all three framing elements simultaneously, indicating a growing editorial tendency to present female athletes as successful, skilled, and influential figures. **While the sample size is limited, the data suggests a favourable shift toward multidimensional and empowering portrayals of women in sport.**

GR2.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

The interpretive focus is qualitative (20 editions out of 20), aiming to identify symbolic trends rather than quantify generalisable outcomes. Two main variables were considered in the analysis:

- Image size: coded based on the visual coverage within the article (i.e., less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half the article);
- Positive framing: based on prior qualitative coding into the categories:
 - Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)
 - Highlighting talent development and skill(s)
 - Emphasising leadership and positive presence

The analysis identified multiple images per edition in some cases, with varying image sizes and positive framing categories.

Table 57: Cross-tabulation of image size and positive framing

Image Size	Positive Framing Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Small (< ¼ page/article)	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	3	9.7%
	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	3	9.7%
	Celebrating achievement(s), Highlighting talent development and skill(s), Leadership	5	16.1%
¼ page/article	Highlighting talent and Emphasising leadership	3	9.7%
	Celebrating achievement(s), Highlighting talent, and Leadership	6	19.4%
Half a page/article	Celebrating achievement(s) and Emphasising leadership	2	6.5%
	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	3.2%
More than half the article	Celebrating achievement(s)	3	9.7%
	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	3.2%
	Celebrating achievement(s), Highlighting talent, and Leadership	4	12.9%

Methodological Notes & Clarifications



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- The total number of editions analysed is 20 (10 each from sdn.gr and gazzetta.gr).
- Several editions include multiple images of varying size and framing.
- The table counts every unique image size + framing combination as one instance, resulting in 31 image instances.
- Percentages reflect the proportion of each framing category within the full set of image instances.

Analysis of 20 editions reveals a **strong editorial trend towards positive framing of female athletes, emphasizing themes such as celebrating achievements, highlighting talent development, and emphasizing leadership. Positive images appear across a range of sizes, with larger images often combining multiple positive attributes, suggesting an editorial preference for richer and more multifaceted portrayals when given greater visual prominence.**

Conversely, negative framing is present but limited, appearing in only 4 editions. It primarily involves sensationalising female athletes, focus on injury, and reinforcement of traditional gender roles. These negative portrayals occur across different image sizes, including significant visual space in some cases, indicating that problematic representations, while less frequent, still receive notable visibility. Overall, the data suggest that Greek online sports media largely valorise female athletes through positive symbolic images, yet occasional negative framings persist, highlighting the complexity of media representation in sport.

GR2.7. Synthesis of the findings of online sports magazines

The analysis of online sports magazines in Greece reveals **both progress and persistent disparities in the representation of female athletes**. All 20 publication date editions examined included references to women in sport, indicating a baseline level of inclusion. However, male athletes received overwhelmingly greater coverage, with each edition featuring more than eight articles about men, compared to a lower and more varied number on female athletes. This reflects **a deeply entrenched editorial prioritization of men's sports**. While the presence of women was more consistent than in other national media, the quantity and depth of coverage remained limited. When female athletes were featured, the portrayal was predominantly positive, focusing on their talent, achievements, and leadership qualities, and generally avoiding sexist language or overt stereotypes. Visual representation was also consistently included and largely affirmative, though a minority of editions exhibited subtle gender bias or stereotypical framing. **Overall, the findings point to a media landscape that is slowly becoming more inclusive, but which still reinforces gender imbalances through unequal coverage and visibility.**

GR3. Social media: X profiles analysis

This section analyses the presence and representation of female athletes in posts published on Greek profiles on the platform X (formerly Twitter), within the framework of the POWER project. This stage seeks to understand how institutional and individual profiles within the sports sector contribute (or not) to the visibility of women in the digital space, with particular focus on X, one of the most widely used social media platforms by federations, clubs, journalists, and athletes for the dissemination of real-time sports content.

The analysis focuses on a single day randomly selected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for a punctual yet revealing examination of gender dynamics within the posts. Data collection followed a common protocol established by the POWER project, considering Greek profiles with relevant activity on the platform. Two institutional media profiles with a high number of followers (between 50,000 and 200,000 the one and between 200,000 to 1 million the other) were analysed: one specialising in sport (*SPORT24*) and the other a generalist (*Protothema*).

GR3.1. Number of analysed posts per X Profile

Table 58 presents the distribution of the 60 analysed posts in the Greek case study, according to the institutional X (formerly Twitter) profile from which they originated. Two high-follower national profiles were included: *SPORT24*, a sport-specialised news outlet, and *Protothema*, a generalist newspaper.

Table 58 Distribution of the article per journal

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of the articles	Percentage
SPORT24	Yes	30	50.0%
Protothema	No	30	50.0%
Total		60	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of posts from both profiles, enabling a comparative analysis between a sport-focused and a general news outlet. For the case of *SPORT24* it is obvious that there were articles related to sports since it is a pure sport profile. However, the significant inclusion of *Protothema* allows for an assessment of how women's sports are represented outside specialised contexts.

GR3.2. Period of the data collection

The distribution of the 60 articles by their month of publication is presented in the following table. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 59 Distribution of the articles per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
February 25	7	11.67%
January 25	6	10.00%
December 24	6	10.00%
November 24	6	10.00%
October 24	6	10.00%
September 24	6	10.00%
August 24	10	16.67%
July 24	7	11.67%
June 24	6	10.00%

The articles are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in August 2024 (16.67%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to Olympic Games. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

The table below shows the distribution of the 60 articles according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 60 Distribution of the article per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	10	16.67%
Tuesday	3	5.00%
Wednesday	10	16.67%
Thursday	10	16.67%
Friday	7	11.67%
Saturday	12	20.00%
Sunday	8	13.33%
Total	60	100%

Saturday shows the highest article circulation (20%) This may be linked to increased reader interest over the weekend, when people have more time to read. High activity also is noticed for the Monday and Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday and Friday follow with a number of articles between 7-9. A notable drop compared to other days appeared on Tuesday.

GR3.3. Number of X posts dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of posts on platform X dedicated to male and female athletes on the days when data were collected. It is noteworthy that, out of the 60 posts of the collection, 37 (45%) did not include any reference to female athletes (see Table 4). **Although this percentage is lower than the percentage of the posts dedicated to female (55%) still it remains high and indicates that more things must be done for a larger visibility of female athletes.**

The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of posts with no mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility within the sports media landscape.

Table 61 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the X posts mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	55.00%
No	27	45.00%
Total	60	100%

In the Greek case study, a total of 60 posts published on platform X were analysed, distributed across 27 different days. Most of these posts referred to male athletes. Specifically, 28 posts (46.66%) included more than eight mentions of male athletes, and an additional 16 posts (26.66%) referred to between five and eight male athletes. This means that **73,32% of the posts focused predominantly on male athletes, reflecting a significant gender imbalance in the content shared by the analysed profiles.**

Table 62 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	8	27
One	3	13
Between 2 and 4	5	17
Between 5 and 8	16	3
More than 8	28	0

In contrast, female athletes were absent from 27 out of the 60 posts (45%). When present, their representation was generally minimal: 13 posts (21.66%) included a single mention of a female athlete, and only 3 posts (5%) had between five and eight mentions. Notably, there was no mention for more than 8 articles for female athletes.

These figures refer exclusively to the 60 posts analysed from Greek institutional and media profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project. The analysis of the above data indicates **a pronounced bias in favour of male athletes**. Nearly three-quarters of the content focused on them, while female athletes were completely absent in nearly half the

posts. **Even when female athletes were mentioned, their presence was minimal.** Only 5% of posts featured a moderate number of female mentions (5–8), and none had high representation (>8 mentions), contrasting sharply with the male data. **The disparity in visibility reflects deeper structural or cultural biases in how sports content is produced or shared on Platform X in the Greek context.** This imbalance can contribute to the ongoing marginalization of female athletes, affecting public recognition, sponsorship opportunities, and the overall growth of women's sports.

GR3.4. Analysis of female athletes' X posts

Out of the full set of observations, 33 posts were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the X posts from Greek profiles (i.e., SPORT24 and PROTOTHEMA). These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Table 63 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Greece (n=7)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	14	42.42%
	Individual sports	17	51.51%
	Mixed (team and individual sports)	2	6.07%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	5	15.16%
	Olympic	28	84.84%

It has to be noted that during the record of the data, there are mentions with two references at the same time, namely professional, Olympic. These cases have been counted in the category of Olympic, given that this is the highest level, and it is obvious that athletes are professionals.

Individual sports were slightly more prominent than team sports, appearing in 51.51% of the X posts. In terms of competitive level, the majority of the articles focused on (84.82%) Olympic level. The reason for this can be that **the individual sports often spotlight the athlete directly making them more appealing for media coverage while articles may prefer to focus on personal achievements and stories which are more prominent in individual sports.**

The data above shows that in the articles referring to women athletes during the selected sample period, the dominant competitive level represented is Olympic. A probable explanation for this concentration is that the Olympic Games are one of the most visible and widely covered

events for women in sport. In contrast, compared to men, women often have fewer high-profile professional leagues, which results in less consistent media attention outside of major international events like the Olympics.

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of the specialised X profile, SPORT24, and non-specialised X profile, Protothema. **While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Greek sports media, they are aligned with patterns identified in previous research: a tendency to marginalise female athletes, especially outside of major events or disciplines perceived as traditionally feminine.**

GR3.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X posts

As previously mentioned, data collection in Greece identified 33 X posts that included references to female athletes. The textual analysis of these posts provide the following findings: Two posts (6%) showed gender stereotypes (success linked to appearance and assume emotionalism) while other three posts (9.09%) contain sexualisation or objectivation of female the athlete by focusing on appearance over ability.

It is worth highlighting that since the majority of the posts are free from sexist language for female athletes or objectivation and sexualisation of women athletes, this **may indicate a positive development in sports discourse regarding the coverage of women. However, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution, as the sample is relatively small.**

From 33 posts, 15 framed female athletes positively, 2 posts (6%) frame female athlete(s) negatively by highlighting sanction(s) or disciplinary issue(s); negative posts have a neutral sense.

Table 64 Framing of female athletes

How female athletes are framed in the posts	Number of posts	Percentage
Positive Frame	15	45.46%
Negative Frame	2	6.06%
Neutral frame (not positive not negative)	16	48.48%

If we are going to count the neutral frame also as positive, we conclude that the majority of posts frame women athletes positively. As concerns the post which frame women athletes positively, these were conveyed through highlighting talent development and skills, sharing inspiring personal stories, emphasising leadership and positive presence, celebrating achievements and records. Such representations point towards **a tendency to value the role and accomplishments of women when they are made visible in sports media discourse.**

Although these findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of the Greek sports media landscape, they provide an indicative picture of how female athletes are represented in the analysed X profiles. **The low incidence of negative stereotypes or objectification, combined with the frequency of positive portrayals, may serve as an important indicator.**

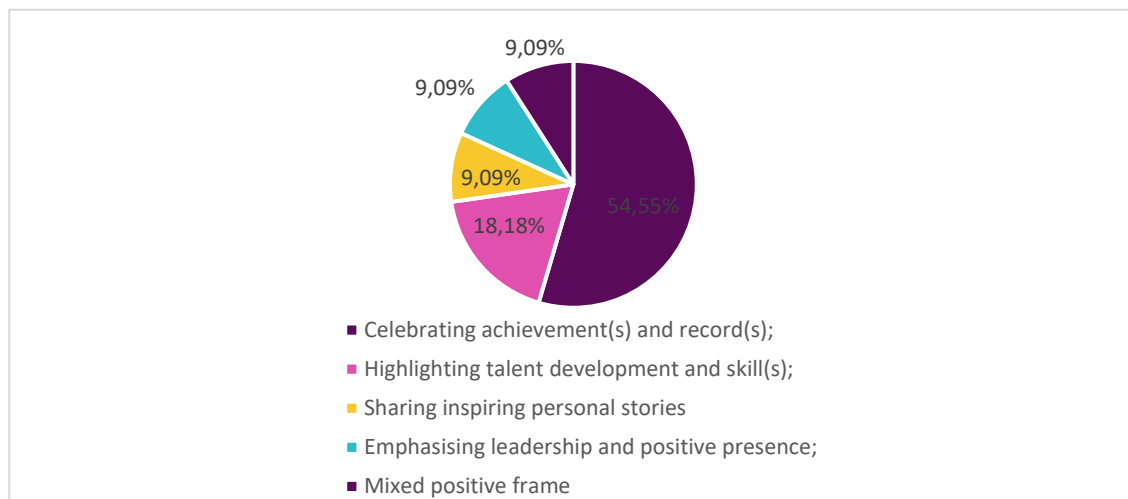


Figure 17 Categorisation of positive framing text

GR3.5. Presence and number of images in the X posts

Of the 33 X posts that mentioned female athletes, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 11 posts (33.33%) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete(s), while 22 posts (66.67%) did not feature any image. **This reveals a significant lack of visual representation of female athletes in X posts within the Greek context.** As a result, the visibility of women athletes is reduced. Without the use of images, athlete recognition and audience familiarity are not enhanced, and user interaction with the content tends to be lower.

It seems that **the absence of imagery highlights that female athletes are still not given the same level of promotional attention as their male counterparts.** It is important to note that these findings refer to a limited sample of Greek profiles analysed within the present study and should not be generalised to the entire digital sports media landscape.

GR3. 5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X post's images

Among the 11 X posts with images mentioning female athletes, two of them trivialise the women athletes performance; while the other Downplaying achievements; In addition form 11 x posts, two of them present gender stereotypes by assuming emotionalism and by linking success to appearance and by promoting traditional gender roles Furthermore, two out of 11 X posts that contain image of women athletes represent sexualisation or objectivation of them

by posed them, provocative representation unrelated to sport performance; Objectifying representation that reduces the athlete(s) to her/their look; Focus on appearance over ability; and inappropriate or unnecessary representation of the body; At the end it must be noted that 9 out of 11 posts that contain image, the last frames the women athletes positively by sharing inspiring personal story(ies), celebrating achievements and records, highlighting talent development and skills and emphasising leadership and positive presence.



Figure 18: Categorisation of the positive fame of women athletes

Although the sample analysed is limited, the absence of sexist representations and the prevalence of affirmative visual narratives may indicate a more respectful and constructive approach in the digital coverage examined.

GR3.6. Synthesis of the findings of social media's posts

This synthesis presents the key findings from the analysis of 60 X posts published by two prominent Greek media accounts (*SPORT24* and *Protothema*), conducted within the framework of the POWER project. The primary aim was to examine the representation and visibility of women athletes on the platform X (formerly Twitter).

The data reveal that **45% of the analysed posts did not mention women athletes at all**, underscoring the ongoing invisibility of women in X, both in specialised (*SPORT24*) and general (*Protothema*) outlets. In contrast, approximately 74% of the posts featured high representation of male athletes, illustrating a pronounced gender imbalance in favour of male athletes. Even in cases where female athletes were mentioned, their depth of coverage remained limited, suggesting that visibility does not equate to substantive representation.

Women athletes involved in individual sports were slightly more frequently represented than those in team sports. This may be attributed to media preferences for personalised narratives,

which are more easily constructed in individual sports. Public interest in personal achievements likely reinforces this trend, shaping media priorities accordingly.

The analysis showed that the majority of posts referring to women athletes focused on those competing at the Olympic level (84.84%), with only a small proportion referencing professional athletes. This finding is consistent with the notion that Olympic athletes receive broader public attention, especially in contexts like Greece, where strong professional leagues for women are limited or underdeveloped.

A significant finding is the systematic lack of visual representation: **67% of posts mentioning women athletes did not include any images.** This deficiency reduces the visibility, engagement, and public recognition of women athletes compared to their male counterparts, and reflects deeper promotional and editorial disparities.

The framing analysis revealed that 45.46% of posts portrayed women athletes positively, highlighting skill development, leadership, and achievements. Additionally, in posts that included images, 9 out of 11 presented athletes in a positive light.

Instances of gender stereotyping or sexualisation were relatively rare. Among all posts, only a small number (6–9%) included stereotypical or objectifying content. Specifically, 2 out of 11 image-based posts used representations that focused on appearance or trivialised athletic performance. While these occurrences suggest that sexist portrayals persist, their low frequency may indicate a gradual shift towards more respectful and constructive coverage of women in sport. However, given the limited sample size, this should be interpreted with caution.

GR4. Online TV Episode Analysis

This analysis refers to the Greek sample of online TV episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025, within the framework of the POWER project. The study examined the visibility and framing of female athletes in sports-related news segments broadcast by national TV channels.

GR4.1. Number of analysed episodes per TV channel

Table 65 presents the distribution of the 39 analysed episodes according to the TV channel of origin. The sample includes editions from two widely circulated national broadcasters: Mega and Open Beyond. Both are generalist channels with regular sports coverage in their news bulletins.

Table 65 Distribution of the episodes per TV channel

TV Station	Number of Episodes	Percentage
Mega	20	51.3%
Open Beyond	19	48.7%
Total	39	100%

The sample is relatively balanced across both channels, allowing a comparative analysis. Mega accounts for just over half of the sample (51.3%), suggesting slightly more frequent inclusion of this channel's episodes.

GR4.2. Period of Data Collection

The distribution of the 39 episodes by their month of broadcast is presented below. The analysis spans from June 2024 to February 2025, covering various seasons and news cycles.

Table 66 Distribution of the episodes by month

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	5	12.8%
July/24	4	10.3%
August/24	4	10.3%
September/24	4	10.3%
October/24	4	15.4%
November/24	4	10.3%
December/24	6	15.4%
January/25	4	10.3%
February/25	4	10.3%

Total	39	100%
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The distribution is well spread over the months. June 2024 and December 2024 had the highest concentration of coded episodes (12.8% & 15.4% respectively), while all the other months had the same number of episodes.

GR4.3. Distribution by weekday

The table 67 shows the distribution of episodes according to the weekday they were aired. This allows the identification of editorial routines or trends related to specific days.

Table 67 Distribution of the episodes by weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	15.4%
Tuesday	2	5.1%
Wednesday	8	20.5%
Thursday	4	10.3%
Friday	8	20.5%
Saturday	6	15.4%
Sunday	5	12.8%
Total	39	100%

The distribution of sports news coverage across the days of the week reveals some notable patterns. While most days feature consistent reporting, Wednesday and Friday stand out with the highest frequency, each accounting for 20.5% of all coverage. In contrast, Tuesday has the lowest frequency at just 5.1%, indicating a relatively quiet day for sports news publication. Monday, Saturday, and Sunday each maintain a strong presence, ranging between 12.8% and 15.4%, suggesting steady weekend and early-week engagement. Thursday sees slightly less activity at 10.3%, though still close to the overall average.

This distribution suggests that while there is a fairly balanced editorial approach, there may be a strategic emphasis on midweek and end-of-week coverage, possibly aligned with major sporting events, match schedules, or audience engagement trends.

GR4.4. Analysis of female athletes' TV reports

Out of the entire sample in Greece, only 13 episodes included any mention of female athletes. These reports form the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in televised sports news.

Table 68 Characteristics of reports featuring female athletes

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the report sport-related?	Yes	12	92.3%
	No	1	7.7%
Type of sport featured	Team sport	10	76.9%
	Individual sport	4	30.8%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	12	92.3%
	Olympic	3	23.1%
	Grassroots	-	-

Across 13 episodes, 92.3% featured sport-related reports on female athletes, with a strong emphasis on professional-level participation. Team sports dominated coverage, appearing in 76.9% of episodes, while individual sports were featured in 30.8%. Professional athletes were represented in nearly all episodes (92.3%), whereas Olympic-level athletes appeared in just 23.1%, and grassroots-level athletes were not featured at all. This suggests a **clear media focus on elite, team-based female sports, with limited visibility for emerging or local-level talent.**

GR4.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes

Only 1 out of the 13 episodes that mentioned female athletes used a negative tone, focusing on failure. Notably, there were no instances of gender stereotypes in the visuals across these episodes, which may indicate a positive editorial shift. Furthermore, none of the reports contained sexualised or objectifying imagery of female athletes.

Importantly, 12 of the 13 episodes (92%) framed female athletes positively. Among the 12 positively framed episodes:

- *58% combined celebration of achievements with recognition of talent;*
- *25% also included an emphasis on leadership or positive presence;*
- *Only 1 episode (8%) focused exclusively on talent development, without highlighting achievements or leadership.*

This suggests a **growing effort to present female athletes in a multidimensional light, though performance remains the dominant lens.** Notably, the inclusion of leadership and presence in some episodes marks a slight editorial expansion beyond traditional portrayals focused solely on athletic output.

GR4.4.2 Gender presence and airtime in TV sports reporting

Out of the 39 analysed episodes:

- *All episodes (100%) –featured reports on male athletes;*
- *Only 13 episodes (33.3%) mentioned female athletes;*

Across all episodes, the total estimated airtime for female athletes was approximately 21 minutes. This reflects a **significant imbalance in both presence and editorial weight**. While **men were featured in every episode**, women appeared in only one-third, and even then, their coverage was often brief and isolated.

The cumulative 21 minutes dedicated to women's sport—across all months and broadcasters—highlights just how **limited their visibility remains within the public sphere of televised sports news**.

GR4.4.3 Positive framing in video footage

Out of 13 episodes that included female athletes, 12 (92%) featured positively framed video footage, while 1 episode (8%) showed neutral content with no clear positive or negative tone.

Among the 12 positively framed episodes:

- 33% combined footage of achievement and talent development;
- 42% focused exclusively on skill and development;
- 25% highlighted leadership or a positive presence.

This points to a **dominant visual narrative rooted in performance and skill**, with some attention beginning to shift toward leadership roles, though still limited.

GR4.5. Synthesis of the findings of TV news episodes

This analysis of 39 online TV news episodes aired by Greece's two leading national broadcasters—Mega and Open Beyond—between June 2024 and February 2025, offers valuable insight into the visibility and framing of female athletes in televised sports reporting. Conducted as part of the POWER project, the study **exposes a significant gender gap in representation, with all episodes (100%) featuring male athletes, while only a third (33.3%) included any reference to women**. This stark disparity is further underscored by the estimated 21 minutes of total airtime dedicated to female athletes across the entire eight-month period—highlighting a persistent underrepresentation in both frequency and editorial weight.

Among the 13 episodes that did feature women, 92.3% included sport-related content, with a strong emphasis on **team sports (76.9%)** and **professional-level athletes (92.3%)**. Olympic-level participation appeared in just 23.1% of episodes, while grassroots sports were entirely absent. This indicates a clear editorial preference for covering elite, high-profile female athletes, often within team-based frameworks. Individual athletes and those in developmental stages of their careers receive limited to no coverage, suggesting a missed opportunity to broaden the narrative around women in sport.

Importantly, the tone and framing of the reports that did include women were **overwhelmingly positive**. Twelve out of 13 episodes (92%) portrayed female athletes in a favorable light, often celebrating their **achievements, talent**, and—in a smaller but significant number of cases—their **leadership and presence**. Furthermore, there was an **encouraging absence of sexualised or objectifying imagery, and no visual gender stereotypes were observed**. These findings may point to a gradual shift in how female athletes are represented on screen, moving toward a more respectful and performance-focused portrayal. Similarly, video footage echoed these trends. Positive framing dominated, with a particular focus on **skill development** (42%), **achievement** (33%), and **leadership** (25%). **However, this visual narrative still largely aligns with traditional performance-based framing, with relatively limited expansion into more diverse or human-interest-oriented storytelling.**

The distribution of coverage over time and weekdays revealed relatively balanced editorial attention, though certain patterns suggest strategic timing—such as the higher frequency of sports coverage on Wednesdays and Fridays. However, this scheduling balance does not translate into content equity, as women’s sports remain marginalized in both presence and depth.

In conclusion, **while there are signs of editorial progress—especially in tone and the avoidance of overt stereotyping—the data make clear that women’s sports continue to be a peripheral concern in mainstream televised news. Representation is selective, often limited to elite professionals, and coverage remains both quantitatively and qualitatively narrower than that of male athletes. For genuine equity in sports media, there must be a more consistent and inclusive approach that elevates a broader spectrum of female athletic experiences, including grassroots, youth, and individual achievements, alongside professional and Olympic success stories.**

GR5. Focus Group Analysis

GR5.1. Details of the focus group organised in Greece

Date: 29/4/2025

Place: Online – zoom meeting

Objectives: Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media, discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media

No of participants: 10

Profile of participants: see the below table

Table 69 Focus Group Participants – Profile Summary

Code	Gender	Professional Role / Affiliation	Relevant Background	Inclusion Category
P1	Male	Journalist in online media	Covered multiple sports topics & sports events	Journalist
P2	Female	Journalist in online media	Covered sports topics; copywriting; marketing	Journalist
P3	Male	Photographer at a women's football team, owner & editor of a magazine focused on women athletes, journalist in online media	editorial work in female athlete coverage; Covered multiple sports topics & sports events	Media professional
P4	Male	Communication Manager, Skate Instructor	Active in youth coaching	Media professional
P5	Female	Content Creator, Social Media & Community Specialist, Communications & Collaborations Manager	creating content for social media; editorial work in female athlete coverage; active in youth coaching;	Content Creator
P6	Female	Professional football player	High-level sport & performance	Female athlete
P7	Female	Professional volleyball player, climbing instructor	Active in youth coaching	Female athlete
P8	Female	Professional football player	High-level sport & performance	Additional participant (Female athlete)
P9	Female	Professional volleyball player	High-level sport & performance	Additional participant (Female athlete)
P10	Female	Professional basketball player	High-level sport & performance	Additional participant (Female athlete)

GR5.2. Thematic Analysis

Table 70 Thematic analysis from Greek focus group

Category: Inequality in Media Coverage		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Difference in coverage between male and female athletes	There is consensus among participants that there is inequality in media coverage between men and women, with men receiving more attention.	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Lack of Female Representation in Leadership and Decision-Making	The scarcity of women in leadership roles within sports media and communication is seen as a major barrier. Without female voices in positions of influence, coverage is unlikely to become more equitable.	P3
Lack of sponsorship and the Double Standard	Athletes report being told that media coverage is contingent on success. However, even with achievements, visibility remains stagnant. This double standard reinforces a cycle where lack of exposure leads to limited sponsorship and support.	P10
Need for Policy Change and Political Will	Must underline the necessity of political intervention to redress these imbalances. Promoting women to decision-making roles and implementing equity-driven policies are considered essential steps.	P9
Structural Inequality in Opportunities and Resources	The limited number of sports academies for girls and unequal access to training or competitive opportunities are viewed as structural issues that restrict women's visibility and advancement in sports.	P5
Predominance of football, basketball or volleyball and invisibility of other sports	Sports like soccer, basketball, gymnastics get more coverage. Track and field receives relatively more coverage for female athletes. Combat sports like boxing get far less. Skateboarding receives very little coverage.	P2, P5, P10
No coverage of women athletes in local media	Local media rarely recognize female athletes, especially those in non-mainstream sports.	P7
Category: Stereotypes and Sexualization		



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Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Cultural and Educational Barriers to Gender Equality in Sports	The root of the inequality lies in entrenched social norms and a lack of public education. Traditional gender roles continue to paint women as inferior in the sporting world.	P1, P2, P9
Perceptions of Entertainment Value and Biological Assumptions	A recurring theme is the belief that women's sports are less entertaining, often justified by biological or performance-based stereotypes. This perception contributes to lower media interest and public engagement.	P5
Focus on Aesthetics Over Athleticism	Female athletes are often judged more for their appearance than their performance. There is a persistent emphasis on beauty standards, clothing, and presentation, reinforcing the idea that their primary value lies in how they look rather than how they compete. Moreover, fans and audiences tend to hold women to stricter expectations, expecting flawless performances while scrutinizing their appearance.	P9, P10
Media Reinforcement of Stereotypes	Rather than challenging outdated beliefs, the media often mirrors them — framing women athletes through superficial narratives.	P2
Category: Lack of Focus on Performance		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Inadequate Journalist Training and Editorial Standards	Journalists often lack formal education or guidelines on how to report equitably on women in sport. Older generations, in particular, may rely on outdated or sexist narratives.	P2, P3, P9
Commercialization and Performative Inclusivity	Media and sports organisations sometimes promote women's sports superficially — emphasizing marketable traits over performance to appear inclusive.	P4
Societal Norms Limiting Audience Perception	Society still expects women to conform to traditional roles; the public isn't used to seeing them as serious athletes. This bias limits appreciation of female athletic effort.	P5, P8, P10
Category: Impact on athletes' careers		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Shifting Gender Norms and Expanding Aspirations	Greater visibility would challenge traditional ideas about what girls "should" do, breaking down gendered barriers in sports participation and career aspirations.	P2, P6
Increased Participation and Early Engagement	Seeing women succeed in sports would encourage more girls to join clubs, academies, and teams early in life, particularly in underrepresented regions.	P5, P6



Reducing Sexualization and Objectification	A shift in media portrayals would influence how boys and society perceive the female body, reducing objectification and promoting respect for athletes.	P7
Boosting Confidence and Ambition	Representation fosters belief and ambition in young girls. Media visibility motivates effort and inspires girls to see themselves as serious athletes.	P10
Contribution to Broader Gender Equality	Enhancing visibility in sports contributes to the wider gender equality movement, reshaping values and attitudes beyond the athletic context.	P9
Category: Sexist and gendered stereotypes		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Generational Divide in Media Perspectives	Younger journalists appear more open to change and more aware of gender issues, while older journalists tend to carry outdated perspectives shaped by a lack of training or societal norms.	P3
Importance of Individual Journalistic Initiatives	Meaningful, respectful coverage of women athletes often stems from individual efforts rather than institutional policy, revealing a lack of systemic change.	P3
Quantity vs. Quality of Coverage	While there is more coverage of women's sports today, the content often lacks depth or reinforces gender stereotypes — suggesting progress in volume, but not necessarily in substance.	P10
Category: Need for Change		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Positive Institutional Shifts and Visibility Gains	There are visible improvements in how women athletes are represented — including shared social media accounts, post-match standings, and increased visibility on platforms. These actions reflect progress in normalizing women's presence in sport.	P1, P3, P6, P8
Role of Individual and Grassroots Initiatives	Change is often driven by individual journalists. These efforts are key drivers of positive coverage and increased visibility.	P8
Influence of Male Allies and Solidarity	Support from male players and teams — including promotion on social media and even pay equity demands — highlights the role of allyship in transforming the sports	P8, P9
Emergence of Dedicated Platforms and Campaigns	Initiatives like Gwomen serve as strong examples of focused and respectful media coverage for female athletes, demonstrating the importance of tailored platforms in amplifying women's voices.	P9, P10
Commercial Representation and Normalization	Women athletes are now increasingly featured in commercial products (e.g., skateboard decks, gear), which contributes to equal recognition and normalizes their presence in traditionally male-dominated sports.	P4



Category 1: Inequality in Media Coverage

Participants unanimously acknowledged a stark disparity in how male and female athletes are covered in the media. Women receive significantly less attention, with their coverage often limited to less visible platforms or personal narratives rather than sporting merit. The issue is exacerbated by the dominance of popular sports like football and basketball, leaving many disciplines — particularly those involving women — virtually invisible. This imbalance is tied to multiple structural issues: a lack of women in decision-making roles within media and sport, insufficient representation in local media, limited access to training resources for girls, and editorial routines shaped by longstanding gender norms. Even when female athletes achieve success, they often face a double standard — where media visibility and sponsorship depend on consistent wins, while male athletes receive more leniency.

Implication: Without addressing these structural and systemic inequalities, the media will continue to reinforce the invisibility of female athletes, perpetuating the cycle of limited recognition, sponsorship, and public engagement.

Category 2: Stereotypes and Sexualization

The media continues to frame women athletes through a narrow lens of beauty, emotion, and traditional femininity. Participants pointed to the cultural and educational roots of this portrayal — with societal norms and outdated perceptions still dominating public and media narratives. Female athletes are frequently judged based on aesthetics rather than skill, reinforcing the belief that their primary value lies in their appearance. Biological and entertainment-based assumptions also fuel these stereotypes, with women's sports viewed as less intense or engaging than men's. Rather than challenging these views, the media often mirrors them, failing to spotlight athleticism or strategic competence.

Implication: These reductive portrayals restrict the way audiences perceive women in sports. They damage athletic credibility and can discourage girls from seeing themselves as capable athletes, ultimately weakening efforts toward gender equity.

Category 3: Lack of Focus on Performance

Female athletes are frequently portrayed through personal stories, emotional angles, or physical appearance, rather than being recognized for their training, strategy, or competitive skill. Participants attributed this to multiple causes: lack of journalist education, outdated editorial practices, and the tendency for sports organisations to engage in superficial forms of inclusivity, focusing on marketability rather than merit. Societal norms also play a significant role, with the public unaccustomed to viewing women as serious competitors. This bias affects the way their performance is appreciated — if at all — in the media.

Implication: The neglect of performance-based coverage devalues women's contributions to sport and hinders their recognition as elite athletes. It also undermines the meritocratic values essential for sporting equality.

Category 4: Impact on Athletes' Careers

Participants stressed that limited visibility and stereotyped media portrayals have tangible consequences for women athletes. Lack of coverage reduces access to sponsorships, diminishes professional legitimacy, and may encourage the sexualization of athletes as a means of gaining attention. In contrast, equitable and respectful representation could expand young girls' aspirations, boost their self-confidence, and inspire early engagement in sport — especially in regions where opportunities are currently limited. Increased visibility could also help reduce societal objectification and foster broader gender equality.

Implication: The media serves as a gatekeeper to opportunity. Correcting biased representation is not just symbolic — it is fundamental to building sustainable and empowering career paths for female athletes and advancing social change.

Category 5: Sexist and Gendered Stereotypes

Participants highlighted how media narratives continue to embed and normalize sexist assumptions — depicting women as emotionally unstable, less capable, or aesthetically pleasing rather than professionally competent. These stereotypes were especially entrenched among older journalists, reflecting generational divides and outdated training. Positive coverage often results from individual journalistic initiative rather than systemic change. While the quantity of coverage has improved slightly, the quality remains questionable, with persistent bias in tone and framing.

Implication: Without structural reforms and journalist training, the media will continue to shape and reinforce societal biases. A conscious, institutional effort is needed to shift how women athletes are portrayed and understood.

Category 6: Need for Change in Representation

There was a strong consensus among participants about the need for fundamental transformation in how women athletes are represented. Positive changes — such as shared social media accounts, inclusive branding, and support from male allies — signal progress, but these efforts are often the result of individual action rather than institutional policy. Dedicated platforms like Gwomen demonstrate how focused, high-quality coverage can amplify women's voices. The normalization of female athletes in commercial spaces and increased involvement in team branding reflect the power of visibility in challenging traditional norms.

Implication: Change must be both systemic and strategic. Media institutions need to integrate equity-driven practices, elevate diverse voices in leadership, and support initiatives that center women's achievements. Doing so is essential for advancing not only gender equality in sport, but societal values at large.

GR5.3. Word cloud analysis

To complement the thematic analysis, we created a word cloud based on the frequency of terms mentioned across participants' contributions in the focus group. Proper names, prepositions, and adverbs were excluded to focus only on meaningful content words. The final list was refined to include only terms that aligned with the six thematic categories established in our analytical framework. This visual representation offers an intuitive overview of the key ideas and concerns discussed, with the most frequently mentioned terms appearing in larger font sizes.



Figure 19 Word cloud from the thematic analysis

Synthesis of the Findings - Greece

The cross-format analysis conducted in Greece reveals **persistent and structural gender disparities in sports media coverage**. Despite incremental improvements and a generally respectful tone across platforms, female athletes remain significantly underrepresented in both frequency and prominence. Data were collected across newspapers, online sports sites, social media (X), and television news, allowing for a thorough examination of content volume, tone, and visual framing.

In the print media sample, while 69% of newspaper editions mentioned female athletes, their **presence was sporadic and marginal**. Male athletes overwhelmingly dominated the coverage, with 91% of editions featuring more than eight articles on men compared to just 6.4% for women. **Articles featuring women were largely positive in tone but heavily focused on elite and professional contexts, particularly team sports. Grassroots athletes received minimal attention, and when images were included, they were small and visually secondary.** Instances of sexist language and stereotypical framing—though infrequent—persisted, reflecting deeper editorial and cultural biases.

Online sports sites displayed greater consistency in the inclusion of female athletes, with 100% of the sampled editions mentioning women. However, male athletes continued to receive more extensive and consistent attention. Positive framing was prevalent, highlighting skill, leadership, and achievements, and problematic representations were relatively rare. **Notably, women were often featured in individual Olympic sports, suggesting a media preference for performance-driven narratives tied to major events rather than ongoing coverage.**

Analysis of **X posts** revealed a **similar pattern**: 55% mentioned female athletes, yet these mentions were often minimal and lacked visual reinforcement—67% of posts had no images. While positive portrayals emphasizing achievement and leadership were common, sexist language and gender stereotyping, though limited, still appeared. **This indicates a symbolic inclusion of women that does not translate into equitable representation.**

Television coverage presented the most striking gender imbalance. Only 13 of 39 episodes mentioned female athletes, and total airtime across all episodes amounted to just 21 minutes. While the tone was largely positive and free from objectification, coverage remained limited to elite professionals, with grassroots or youth sports entirely absent. Video framing favored performance and leadership narratives, but lacked thematic depth and continuity.

The focus group discussions reinforced these findings. Participants highlighted the dominance of men's sports, entrenched stereotypes, and editorial practices shaped by outdated norms and lack of training. Female athletes themselves pointed to the double standard in media visibility and its impact on sponsorship and career development. A consistent call emerged for systemic change, including media education, institutional reforms, and the amplification of female voices in editorial and decision-making roles.

While the Greek media landscape shows signs of progress—particularly in the tone of coverage and emerging platforms dedicated to women's sport—this progress is undermined by ongoing imbalances in volume, visibility, and narrative diversity. Female athletes are still framed through a narrow, high-performance lens, with limited exploration of their broader contributions to sport and society.

Addressing these disparities will require a strategic and sustained commitment to inclusive reporting practices, training for media professionals, and regulatory or policy incentives aimed at achieving gender equity in sports journalism.



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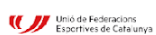
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Introduction

In Hungary, the sports sector continues to reflect significant gender imbalances, both in participation and leadership. While female involvement in grassroots and competitive sport has seen some progress, structural barriers remain firmly in place. According to data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH) and the Hungarian Olympic Committee (MOB), women comprise approximately one-third of registered athletes across all sports, yet this proportion sharply declines at higher levels of governance and professional engagement. In 2019 Andrea Gál and Gyöngyi Szabó Földesiné characterised Hungary as illustrating “*unquestioned male dominance in sport governance*,” with few women in top roles across national federations.¹

In coaching, the gender gap is even more pronounced: women make up just 8–10% of certified coaches nationwide, with their presence in elite-level coaching roles remains marginal. Research by scholars such as Judit Balogh and Gabriella Trzaskoma-Bicsérdy confirms that despite female coaches in Hungary often hold higher educational qualifications and stronger pedagogical beliefs, they constitute only approximately 30% of registered coaches—mostly within youth categories, and rarely in elite-level positions².

This pattern of under-representation extends into the domain of sports media. Research conducted by the Hungarian Media Council and independent scholars reveals that female athletes receive only a fraction of the coverage afforded to their male counterparts. A recent content analysis of televised news reports and print media shows that women account for less than 10% of all sports-related content. Coverage tends to spike around large-scale international events such as the Olympics but remains sporadic and inconsistent throughout the rest of the year.

Notably, women's football has gained some visibility in recent years, supported by both UEFA-driven development initiatives and domestic interest. However, even in this relatively growing segment, media coverage and institutional support lag significantly behind the men's game. These figures and patterns collectively underscore the systemic invisibility of women in Hungarian sport and highlight the ongoing need for transformative approaches in policy, leadership, and media representation.

¹ Gál, A., & Földesi, S. G. (2019). Hungary: Unquestioned male dominance in sport governance. In A. Elling, J. Hovden, & A. Knoppers (Eds.), *Gender diversity in European sport governance* (Routledge Research in Sport, Culture and Society, pp. 70–80). London: Routledge.

² Balogh, Judit & Trzaskoma-Bicsérdy, Gabriella. (2020). Gender Differences in Hungarian Basketball Coaches' Views on Their Pedagogical and Professional Roles and Responsibilities. *International Sport Coaching Journal*. 8. 1-9. 10.1123/iscj.2020-0010.

HU1. Newspaper Magazine Analysis

This initial analysis refers to the newspapers under review. A sample of 169 newspaper editions published in Hungary between June 2024 and February 2025 was analysed, with data collection taking place between April and May 2025.

HU1.1. Number of analysed articles per newspaper

Table 71 presents the distribution of the 169 articles analysed in the Hungarian case study, according to the newspaper of origin. Editions from four widely circulated national publications were included: Népszava, Magyar Nemzet, Origo Sport and Nemzeti Sport. While the first two are general news outlets, the latter two are sport-specific ones.

Table 71 Distribution of the articles per journal

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of the articles	Percentage
Népszava	No	24	14.2%
Magyar Nemzet	No	31	18.3%
Origo Sport	Yes	36	21.3%
Nemzeti Sport	Yes	78	46.2%
Total		169	100%

The prestigious and popular sports news daily, *Nemzeti Sport* published almost half of the articles (46.2%). The other half of the articles were distributed among the other three publications in a relatively balanced way. Not surprisingly the other sport-focused outlet, *Origo Sport* contained the second highest percentage of sports news (21.3%). It was highly important to include two general news outlets in the analysis to get an understanding of how sport — especially women's sport — is portrayed in non-sport-focused media.

HU1.2. Period of the data collection

Table 72 presents the distribution of the 169 articles by their month of publication. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 72 Distribution of the articles per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
Jun/24	16	9.5%
Jul/24	24	14.2%
Aug/24	24	14.2%
Sep/24	12	7.1%
Oct/24	21	12.4%

Nov/24	12	7.1%
Dec/24	23	13.6%
Jan/25	23	13.6%
Feb/25	14	8.3%
Total	169	100%

The articles are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in July-August 2024 (14.2% each) and December-January 2024 (13.6% each) potentially reflect increased sports coverage due to major sport events (Summer Olympics in Paris) and end-of-year and start-of-year round-ups and lists of events. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 73 shows the distribution of the 169 articles according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 73 Distribution of the articles per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	20	11.8%
Tuesday	21	12.4%
Wednesday	25	14.8%
Thursday	21	12.4%
Friday	35	20.7%
Saturday	22	13%
Sunday	25	14.8%
Total	169	99.9%

There is a noticeable concentration of articles published on Fridays (20.7%), possibly reflecting editorial routines related to pre-weekend sports reporting. The presence of articles on Wednesdays and Sundays is also significant (14.8% each), showing consistent sports coverage throughout the week rather than a weekend-only pattern.

HU1.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per newspaper edition. The data are grouped into ranges based on the observed volume of coverage.

Table 74 indicates whether each of the 169 analysed editions included any mention of female athletes. It is worth mentioning that seven editions did not mention any athletes (4.1%), and all of them were of a non-sport-specific newspaper. These editions were excluded from the analysis of the presence of male and female athletes.

Table 74 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	136	84%
No	26	16%
Total	162	100%

84% of the 162 analysed editions included some mention of female athletes, which is a high percentage, compared to other countries participating in this study. Only 16% of the editions did not reference women athletes at all. Table 75 presents the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes. Just as in Table 4, we excluded the seven editions that did not mention any sports at all.

Table 75 Article numbers dedicated to male and female athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	2	26
One	14	15
Between 2 and 4	4	61
Between 5 and 8	23	25
More than 8	119	35
Total (valid responses)	162	

Almost three-quarters of the editions (73.5%) included more than eight articles focusing on male athletes, clearly demonstrating the dominant presence of men's sport in newspaper coverage. When combined with editions featuring five to eight articles, the total rises to 87.7%, reinforcing the gender imbalance in media focus.

61 editions (37.7%) published between two to four articles about women athletes, making it the most populated category in women's coverage. 35 editions (21.6%) had more than eight news items on women athletes, which is a high number in the European comparison. It is noteworthy that 30 out of these 35 editions were published during the Olympic Games Paris 2024. A further 25 articles (15.4%) published five to eight articles mentioning women. These numbers mean that out of the 162 editions, 121 (74.7%) had at least two articles dedicated to women athletes. This is still lower than the number (146 – 90.1%) of publications with a minimum of two articles on male athletes, but the gap is much closer than in some other participating countries. It is worth mentioning that two editions (1.2%) had coverage solely on women athletes, which is a rarity, even in the European comparison.

HU1.3.1. Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes in Hungary

A t-test was conducted on a sample of 169 newspaper editions analysed in Hungary (published between mid-2024 and early 2025), with the aim of comparing the average number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes. The results show that, on average, the editions

contained 6.95 articles (SD = 1.25) about male athletes and 4.70 articles (SD = 0.60) about female athletes.

The difference in the average number of articles per edition is statistically highly significant. Male athletes (mean = 6.95) receive significantly more media coverage than female athletes (mean = 4.7), despite both groups appearing frequently in sports sections. The very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.24$) indicates that this disparity is not only statistically significant but also substantial in practical terms. Table 76 presents these findings in a table format.

Table 76 Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes in Hungary

Gender	Mean articles per edition	SD	p (two-tailed)
Male	6.95	1.25	< .001
Female	4.70	0.60	< .001

The revised data collected in Hungary reflect a persistent imbalance in the media coverage of male and female athletes. On average, newspaper editions contained 2.25 more articles on male athletes than on female athletes. Although the absolute number of articles on female athletes is higher than previously assumed, the discrepancy remains statistically and practically significant.

This imbalance reveals more than just a numerical gap; it reflects the editorial priorities of sports journalism. The moderate-to-large effect size suggests that male athletes not only receive more attention but also that this attention is distributed less evenly, possibly reflecting greater media focus during major men's events or leagues.

While the presence of female athletes in sports media has increased, the findings confirm that structural inequality persists in terms of both quantity and editorial emphasis. Sports journalism in Hungary still tends to centre male athletes, relegating women's coverage to a less prominent role, even when achievements are comparable.

HU1.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the entire sample (169 newspaper editions) 136 articles were identified in Hungary that included any mention of female athletes. These articles constitute the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in sports journalism. The following section examines various aspects of these 136 articles. The key data is presented in Table 77.

Table 77 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Hungary (n = 136)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the article sport-related?	Yes	130	95.6%
	No	6	4.4%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	63	46.3%
	Individual sports only	61	44.9%
	Individual and team sport and/or mixed team sport	12	8.8%
Competitive level of athletes	Solely professional	85	62.5%
	Professional and Olympic	47	34.6%
	Professional and Amateur	3	2.2%
	Amateur, Grassroots	1	0.7%

Most articles featuring female athletes (95.6%) are directly related to sport, indicating that the presence of sportswomen in the media is usually linked to their sporting roles. However, the 4.4% of non-sport-related articles raise concerns: in these cases, athletes are often featured in contexts such as lifestyle and social media presence, while their athletic achievements may be secondary. This highlights the importance of critically examining how female athletes are framed editorially.

Among the articles featuring female athletes, the percentage of team sports and individual sports is almost identical (46.3% and 44.9%, respectively), while 8.8% of the editions featured both individual and team sports. The relative balance indicates that women's sport, when covered, is not limited to one competitive format.

62.5% of the articles cover solely professional sports, while 34.6% were about both professional sports and Olympic news. This suggests that visibility for women in sport is largely confined to high-performance contexts. Amateur and grassroots-level athletes are significantly underrepresented, appearing in only four cases (2.9%) — a finding that limits public recognition of the diverse spaces in which women engage in sport.

HU1.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As already mentioned, data collection in Hungary identified 136 female athletes' articles. Analysis of these texts revealed that in 11 instances (8.1%) sexist language or derogatory expressions based on gender was used. This suggests that, in most cases where women are included (91.9%), journalistic discourse tends to avoid discriminatory terminology. Out of these 11 articles, five were about a boxer who competed in the women's welterweight competition at the Paris Olympics, despite information circulating about her gender-based eligibility. The rest of the articles using sexist language focused on female athletes' looks, style and emotions instead of their performances. 14 articles (10.3%) among those analysed

trivialised the performance of female athletes, through the framing of “downplaying achievements”. These cases illustrate how symbolic devaluation practices still occur in sports media, targeting women athletes.

Regarding gender stereotypes, 25 (18.4%) of the 136 articles presented such content. Gender stereotyping occurred through the framing of “questioning women athletes’ femininity” in nine cases (6.6%), while “assumed emotionalism” was present in seven cases (5.1%) and “success linked to appearance” in six articles (4.4%), to mention the most popular framings.

14 articles (10.3%) contained references to sexualisation or objectification of women athletes. 12 (8.8%) of them focused on appearance over ability and 11 (8.1%) used objectifying language that reduces the athletes to their look.

It is important to note that the sample already derives from a small subset of articles (136) that effectively include women – which may skew the data towards a more positive representation than what is seen across the broader media landscape.

HU1.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

Among the 136 articles analysed, 19 (14%) included negative framing of female athletes. Nine (6.6%) focused the narrative on failures, while eight (5.9%) were concerned with disciplinary issues, to mention the most popular ways of negative framing. On the other hand, 78 articles (57.4%) demonstrated explicitly positive framing of female athletes.

The qualitative categorisation of positive framing revealed the following main patterns. For example, in 66.7% of the positively framed articles (52), the text celebrated the achievements of female athletes. In 21 articles this was the only positive framing, whereas in 31 articles other positive framing elements were also present, for example, highlighting talent development and skills (17), and sharing of inspiring personal stories (8 articles). The celebration of talent development appeared in further 16 articles, making it the second most popular positive framing category, after the celebration of achievements.

HU1.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

The 136 articles that featured female athletes were also analysed for the presence of images. 124 (91.2%) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete(s), while 7 (5.1%) contained a picture of a male, for instance, a coach. 5 articles (3.7%) were not illustrated with a picture.

79 articles (58.1%) had only one picture, while 27 (19.9%) featured two images. The remaining 25 articles had more than two images. These numbers indicate that some reports used more extensive visual sequences. Figure 20 presents the distribution of the images involved in the analysed newspaper editions regarding their size.

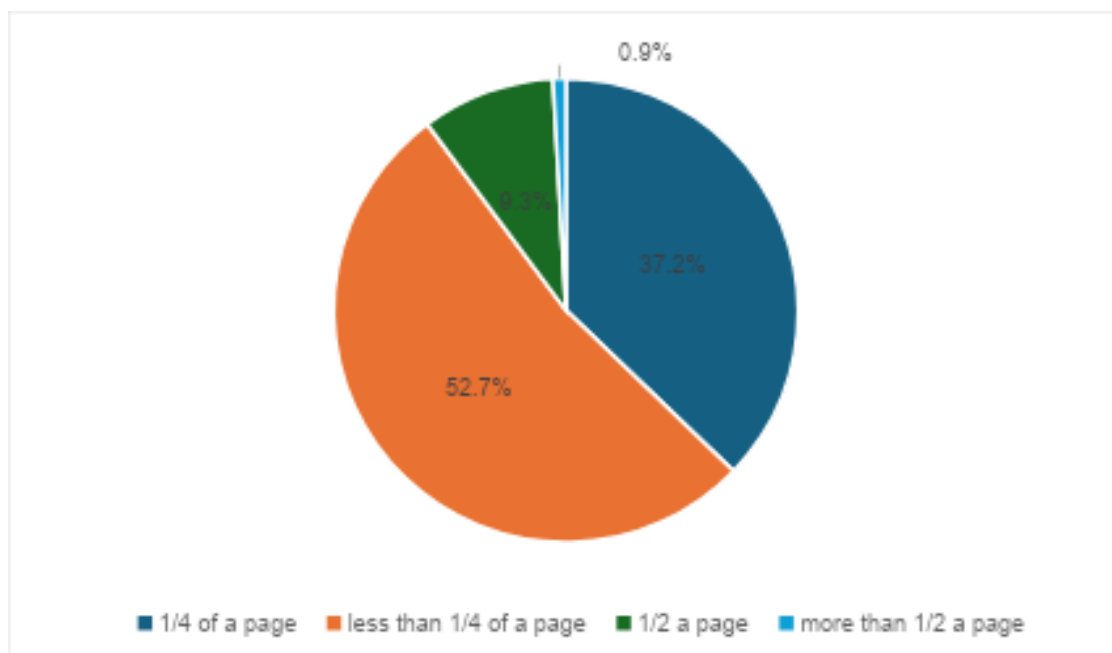


Figure 20 Size of the images involved in the analysed newspaper editions

Regarding the size of the images, there was a clear predominance of smaller visual formats. In total, 226 images were examined for their size. 119 (52.7%) were smaller than a quarter of a page, while 84 (37.2%) were quarter of a page. Only 23 images (10.2%) were at least half a page large. **These findings suggest that, even when female athletes are visually represented, the images tend to occupy modest editorial space, potentially limiting their impact.**

HU1.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the image

Among the 124 articles containing images of female athletes, only two images (1.6%) trivialised the performance of the athletes, by downplaying their achievements. 11 images (8.9%) contained some type of gender stereotyping; six images suggested questioning the athletes' femininity, whereas in five images the athletes' success was linked to their appearance. 11 images represented sexualisation or objectification of female athletes, mostly in the form of objectifying representation that reduces the athletes to their look and focusing on their appearance over their ability.

HU1.5.2. Negative and positive framing in the images

6 articles (4.8%) presented negative framing. In three cases the images highlighted sanction(s) or disciplinary issue(s), two images focused on failures, while one emphasised an injury.

116 articles (93.5%) visually framed female athletes in a positive light, mostly by celebrating their achievements (44 – 35.5%), highlighting their skills (26 – 21%), emphasising leadership and positive presence (23 – 18.5%) and sharing inspiring personal stories (18 – 14.5%). Figure 21 illustrates the distribution of the subcategories within imagery positive framing.

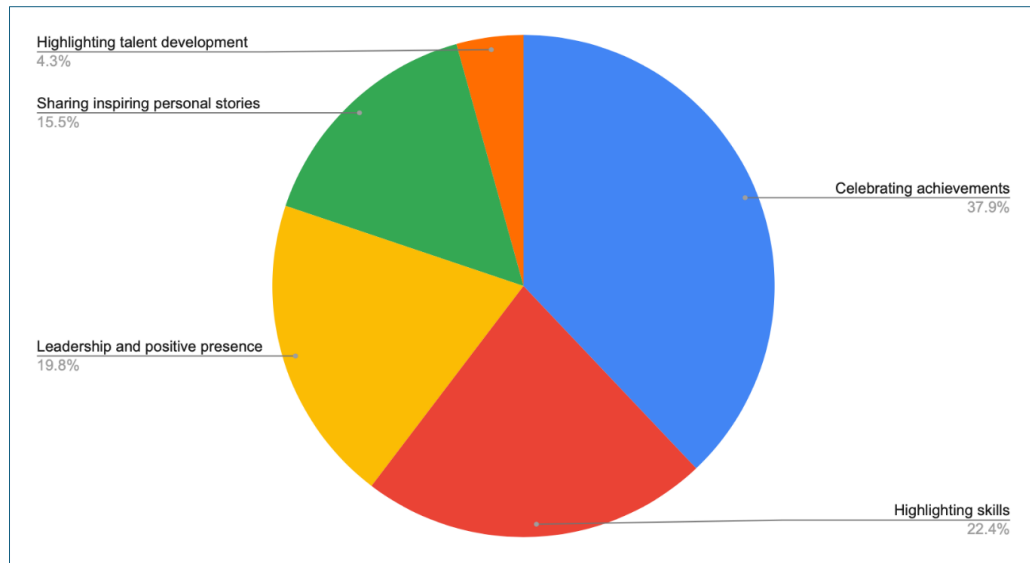


Figure 21 Categorisation of positive framing images

With the aim of deepening the qualitative analysis of the positive media representations of female athletes, a bipartite network visualisation was created using Gephi software (version 0.10.1). The network was constructed by cross-referencing the headlines of news articles with the previously coded categories of positive framing, such as “celebration of achievements”, “development of talent”, or “leadership and positive presence”.

For this purpose, the network nodes were organised into two distinct types: article headlines and thematic categories, allowing a visual representation of the relationship between the published content and the symbolic framings attributed to the athletes. The connections (edges) indicate the presence of a specific category within a given headline.

The data were organised into two spreadsheets, one listing the nodes and the other the connections, and were imported into Gephi Software (version 0.10.1). Following importation, the ForceAtlas 2 layout algorithm was applied, as it is particularly suitable for networks that exhibit a modular or community-based structure. Figure 22 illustrates the network between headlines and positive categories. Is it followed by Table 78, presenting the codes, categories and headlines in this analysis.

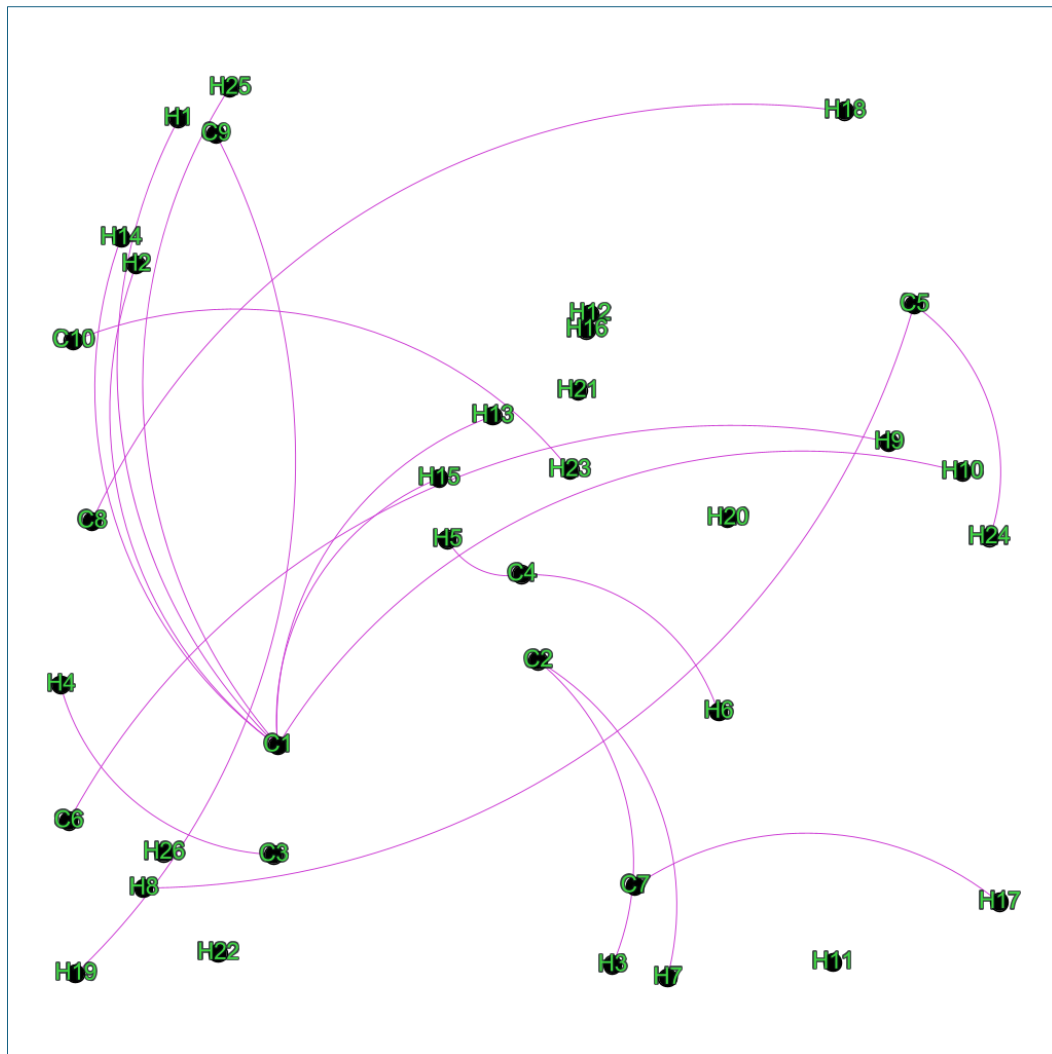


Figure 22 Network between headlines and positive categories

Table 78 Codes, Categories and Headlines

Code	Category and Headlines
C1	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)
C2	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s); Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)
C3	Highlighting talent development and skill(s); Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s); Sharing inspiring personal story(ies); Emphasising leadership and positive presence
C4	Emphasising leadership and positive presence; Highlighting talent development and skill(s)
C5	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s); Emphasising leadership and positive presence
C6	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s); Highlighting talent development and skill(s)

C7	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)
C8	Emphasising leadership and positive presence; Sharing inspiring personal story(ies); Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)
C9	Emphasising leadership and positive presence; Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)
C10	Highlighting talent development and skill(s); Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s); Sharing inspiring personal story(ies); Emphasising leadership and positive presence
H1	Petra Senánszky won gold medals in the 50-meter freestyle, Kristóf Milák in the 200-meter butterfly, while our mixed freestyle relay team won gold medals in the 4x200 m competition
H2	Boglárka Takács reaches the semifinals in the 100 meters with a national record
H3	Katinka Hosszú announced her retirement
H4	Relive the women's handball team's match to the European Championship bronze medal with us.
H5	Gábor Kubatov's dream could come true if Fradi wins today, taking a big step towards the Champions League trophy
H6	Extra burden on Tamara Csipes, the loot must be secured
H7	Eszter Muhari needed an unprecedented, crazy crime story to win the Olympic bronze medal
H8	It has been decided where Győri ETO's key player will continue her career
H9	Fradi won easily, Katrin Klujber scored a miracle goal
H10	Győr won an important victory in the Champions League
H11	Hungarian handball player could be the best player in the German Bundesliga
H12	Fradi signs Danish national team world star
H13	EURO 2024: Dóra Zeller, playing in Cologne, expects a German EURO victory
H14	European Fencing Championships: Men's team fifth; women's team fourth
H15	Women's Handball NB I: Debrecen sweated against NEKA
H16	Our women's team rides a wave with the defeat over the Dutch – they would ride against Greece
H17	Gymnastics: women's gymnasts are preparing for the season in Tata
H18	Kayak-canoe: Renáta Csay, the most successful marathon kayaker of all time, has retired
H19	Krisztina Egerszegi: some people are excited by such an opportunity
H20	As an Olympian, she finished her career at the top – interview with Gréta Kerekes
H21	Georgina Póta: to win the club as a two-three player, and to win the Euro with a small team comprising only Hungarians
H22	"I hope Debrecen will bring luck to the European Championship" - according to Petra Fűzi-Tóvizi, something "scratched" with the women's handball team
H23	Volleyball player, mountain jumper, photo model – this is Gréta Szerényi

H24	Three-time Olympic champion Australian swimmer also takes a long break
H25	Our women's water polo team won and advanced under the leadership of Keszthelyi
H26	Wimbledon: Paolini reaches final against Vekic in amazing match

The network visualisation of headlines and thematic categories from Hungarian online sports magazines highlights several key patterns in how female athletes are symbolically framed:

Thematic centrality: The category “Celebrating achievements and records” emerges as the most connected node within the network, underscoring its dominant role in the representation of female athletes. This suggests that success-oriented narratives — particularly those celebrating victories or milestone accomplishments — serve as the primary lens through which women in sport is recognised in digital sports journalism.

Secondary thematic clusters: Additional clusters are formed around categories such as “Highlighting talent development and skills” and “Emphasising leadership and positive presence.” These categories, while less central than the celebration of achievement, reflect a symbolic framing of female athletes as aspirational figures — not only excelling in sport, but also contributing with leadership, character, and perseverance.

Complexity in framing: Several headlines are connected to more than one thematic category, reflecting nuanced portrayals. For instance, articles referencing multiple themes such as success, talent, and inspiration suggest an editorial effort to build well-rounded, affirming narratives around individual athletes. This multiplicity reinforces the idea that positive framing can be both layered and strategic.

Thematic isolation and editorial intent: Conversely, some headlines are linked to only one category, pointing to more specific or focused editorial messages — such as a single match result or record broken. These isolated links often reflect targeted media attention, potentially influenced by the athlete's momentary prominence or relevance to ongoing competitions.

Visual clustering: The spatial structure of the network reveals visible groupings between headline nodes and thematic categories. This clustering indicates that certain themes — especially success and inspiration — tend to co-occur across multiple articles, suggesting a patterned editorial approach in framing female athletes in online sports media.

HU1.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the framing of female athletes, we analysed the 124 articles with 226 images from the Hungarian sample that included visual representations of women in sport. Two key variables were considered:

- *Image size*: coded as an ordinal categorical variable with four categories — less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half a page. For analytical purposes, this variable was subsequently grouped into two levels: a) small images (no image or less than ¼ of the page); b) medium/large images (equal to or greater than ¼ of the page)
- *Framing of the athlete in the image*: assessed across two binary dimensions: a) positive (yes/no): presence of visual elements that highlight or celebrate the athlete; b) negative (yes/no): presence of visual elements that diminish, stigmatise, or symbolically penalise the athlete.

To test the association between the variables, cross-tabulations were conducted using Pearson's Chi-square test, likelihood ratio, and Fisher's Exact Test (to small sample), with a significance level set at 5% ($p < .05$). Table 79 presents the results in a table format.

Table 79 Image size, positive and negative framing of female athletes

Image size	Positive framing	Number of the images	Negative Framing	Number of the images
Small (< ¼ page)	Yes	57	Yes	4
Small (< ¼ page)	No	58	No	0
Medium or large (≥ ¼ page)	Yes	81	Yes	2
Medium or large (≥ ¼ page)	No	24	No	0
Positive framing	Pearson's Chi-square: $\chi^2(1) = 16.69$, $p = 0.00004$ Likelihood ratio: 17.06, $p = 0.00004$ Fisher's Exact Test (2-sided): $p = 0.00003$			
Negative framing	Fisher's exact test (2-sided): $p = 1.000$			

The above analysis shows a statistically significant association between image size and the positive framing of female athletes. Among smaller images, only about half (57 out of 115) were positively framed, while the rest (58) were framed neutrally, not negatively. In contrast, larger images presented a much higher proportion of positive portrayals (81 out of 105), with only 24 neutral depictions.

All three statistical tests — Pearson's Chi-square, the Likelihood Ratio (G-test), and Fisher's Exact Test — confirm the strength of this relationship ($p < .001$), indicating that larger images are far more likely to depict female athletes in a positive light.

This trend may reflect intentional editorial choices, where greater visual emphasis through larger images is reserved for stories that portray women in sport as empowered, successful, or inspirational. These visual decisions could be attributed to the Hungarian female athletes' successful participation at the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games: Hungarian female athletes won 2 gold, 3 silver and 2 bronze medals.

On the other hand, the analysis of negative framing reveals no significant association with image size. Only 6 images across all articles were judged as negatively portraying female athletes and most of these images were linked to the negative portrayal of boxer Imane Khelif who faced Luca Hámori in the box ring in the Paris Olympics. However, due to the extremely low frequency, statistical tests (Fisher's Exact Test, $p = 1.00$) do not support any meaningful patterns.

This suggests that negative portrayals are rare and do not benefit from visual prominence — if anything, they may be visually minimised or avoided. Combined, the results highlight an asymmetry: positive narratives are amplified through image size, while negative narratives are both infrequent and visually subdued, potentially signalling a shift toward more affirming and respectful representations of women in sport.

HU1.7. Final synthesis of findings of newspapers' articles

The analysis of **Hungarian print sports media**, conducted within the framework of the POWER project, **reveals both progress and persistent disparities in the representation of female athletes**. Drawing from 169 newspaper editions across four prominent Hungarian outlets (including two general and two sports-specialised publications), the findings present a complex picture of increasing inclusion but enduring imbalance.

One notable result is the **relatively high presence of women athletes: 84% of editions included at least one mention of female athletes, and nearly three-quarters featured two or more related articles**. This level of inclusion stands out in a European comparison and reflects a tangible shift toward greater visibility of women in sport — especially during the 2024 Paris Olympics. However, male athletes still dominate media coverage, with significantly more articles per edition (mean = 6.95) compared to female athletes (mean = 4.70). This disparity is statistically significant and substantial (Cohen's $d = 2.24$), revealing that while female athletes appear regularly, they remain secondary to their male counterparts in terms of editorial focus.

The textual analysis of 136 articles featuring women athletes revealed generally respectful and sport-focused coverage. Over 95% of these articles related directly to the athletes' sporting performance, with only minor incidences of objectification (8.1%) or gender stereotyping (18.4%). Most notably, 57.4% of these articles positively framed female athletes, with achievements, talent development, and inspirational narratives as recurring themes. This suggests a broader editorial commitment to affirming portrayals, though 14% of articles still included negative framing, often tied to failure or disciplinary themes.

Visual representation shows a similar trend. While most articles (91.2%) included at least one image of a female athlete, image sizes tended to be small — over half were less than a quarter of a page. Importantly, statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between image size and positive framing: larger images were far more likely to celebrate achievements or portray

athletes as leaders or role models. Conversely, negative visual framing was rare (4.8%) and unrelated to image size, typically appearing only in niche or disciplinary contexts (notably, the case of boxer Imane Khelif at the Paris Olympics).

Taken together, the data suggest that Hungarian print sports media increasingly portray women athletes in a positive and respectful light, particularly in high-performance settings. However, this positive treatment exists alongside continued structural underrepresentation, especially in comparison to male athletes. Moreover, the celebratory and inspirational tone of visual and textual framing — though welcome — is often linked to moments of major success, such as Olympic participation, rather than integrated into regular sports coverage.

This indicates a media landscape where recognition does not yet equate to equal presence. The findings underscore the importance of not only affirming portrayals but also more systematic and proportional inclusion of female athletes across all levels of sport. Addressing this imbalance means integrating women more fully into the editorial fabric of sports journalism — not only during exceptional moments, but as part of the everyday narrative of Hungarian sport.



HU2. Online Sports Magazine Analysis

The sample of online sports publications analysed in Hungary comprised two specialised digital magazines: *player.hu* and *sportime.hu*. Player.hu focuses on sharing news about popular team sports and motor sports, but publishes articles on all areas of the world of professional sport. Sportime.hu, on the other hand, publishes news from the world of leisure sports.

A total of 19 entries were collected from these outlets, covering publication dates between June 2024 and February 2025. The selected articles span various weekdays and reflect the diversity of editorial calendars across the two different online media outlets. This sample provides insight into the visibility and representation of athletes—both male and female—within the online sports journalism landscape of Hungary.

Seven articles (36.8%) were published on a Sunday, making it the busiest day of the week in terms of publication. The second-busiest day was Saturday, with five entries (26.3%), making the weekend a much busier time than weekdays. Three articles (15.8%) were published on Friday. Two articles were published on a Tuesday (10.5%), while one article was published on a Wednesday, one on a Thursday (5.3% each). Interestingly, no article was published on a Monday in the analysed sample.

HU2.1. Number of analysed articles per Online Sports Magazine

The table below summarises the number of entries collected from each online sports magazine. It reflects the total number of editions analysed per outlet, regardless of gender focus or athlete type:

Table 80 Distribution of the articles per online magazine

Online Sports Magazine	Number of the articles	Percentage
Player.hu	10	52.6%
Sportime.hu	9	47.4%
Total	19	100%

As seen in the table, the distribution of the articles between the two portals is almost even.

HU2.2. Period of the data collection

Table 81 presents the distribution of the 19 entries analysed from Hungarian online sports magazines according to the month of publication. Data were collected between June 2024 and February 2025, offering a temporal snapshot across multiple seasons and editorial cycles.

Table 81 Distribution of the articles per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	2	10.5%
July/24	2	10.5%
August/24	3	15.8%
September/24	2	10.5%
October/24	2	10.5%
November/24	2	10.5%
December/24	2	10.5%
January/25	2	10.5%
February/25	2	10.5%
Total	19	100%

According to Table 81, the distribution of articles over the nine month is almost even. Apart from August – when three articles were analysed (15.8%) -, all months had two articles (10.5% each) in the analysis. This even distribution supports a comprehensive view of coverage patterns over time, mitigating the risk of seasonal bias. Table 12 shows the distribution of the articles per weekday.

Table 82 Distribution of the articles per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	0	0%
Tuesday	2	10.5%
Wednesday	1	5.3%
Thursday	1	5.3%
Friday	3	15.8%
Saturday	5	26.3%
Sunday	7	36.8%
Total	19	100%

Table 82 reveals that Sundays represented the most common day of publication (36.8%), followed by Saturdays (26.3%) and Fridays (15.8%). Tuesdays were the most popular days in the first half of the week (10.5%). Weekdays in the middle of the week – Wednesdays and Thursdays –, each represented the smallest proportions of the sample (5.3%), apart from Mondays with no articles published. The predominance of weekend publication could reflect editorial cycles that prioritise live weekend sports coverage or athlete features. The diversity in publication days adds robustness to the sample by avoiding overreliance on a single day or pattern of coverage.

HU2.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This section compares the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per Online Sports Magazine edition. Table 83 indicates whether each of the 19 analysed editions mentioned female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of editions without any mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility in online sports media.

Table 83 Mention of female athletes in the magazines

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	84.2%
No	3	15.8%
Total	36	100%

All editions (19 – 100%) contained reference to male athletes, and 16 (84.2%) mentioned female athletes. The data were grouped into ranges based on the volume of coverage observed.

As all editions featured male athletes, and 15.8% did not mention any females, a slight gender disparity is noticeable within the online sports outlets analysed.

Table 84 presents the distribution of article counts dedicated to male and female athletes across the 19 editions.

Table 84 Article numbers dedicated to male and female athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	0	3
One	0	11
Between 2 and 4	13	5
Between 5 and 8	6	0
More than 8	0	0
Total (valid responses)	19	

For male athletes, 13 editions (68.4%) featured between two and four athletes, and another six editions (31.6%) had between five and eight. Together, these account for the entire sample.

In stark contrast, 11 editions featured only one article (57.9%) about female athletes. A further five editions (26.3%) featured between two and four news items about female athletes. The remaining three editions (15.8%) had no entries about female athletes.

These results reflect that female athletes have significantly less visibility on online platforms.

From this sample and in this period, this analysis reinforces the broader finding of systemic underrepresentation of women in Hungarian sports journalism. The low frequency of female-focused coverage underscores the persistence of gender bias within sports media.

HU2.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the full set of observations, 16 articles were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the Hungarian online sports magazines. These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured, presented in Table 85.

Table 85 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Hungary (n = 16)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	6	37.5%
	Individual sports	6	37.5%
	Team and Individual sports	4	25%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur, Grassroots	1	6.3%
	Grassroots	1	6.3%
	Professional	11	68.8%
	Professional, Olympic	3	18.8%

Six-six editions featured solely team sports and solely individual ones (37.5% each), whereas four editions (25%) featured articles both about team sports and individual sports. This suggests an even coverage between the team and individual sport categories.

In terms of competitive level, most articles focused on professional athletes (68.8%). Three editions (18.8%) covered both professional and Olympic-level sports. Solely grassroots sport was talked about in one edition (6.3%), while another edition featured both amateur and grassroots sports (6.3%). This limited presence of lower-level female athletes reveals an editorial gap in the coverage of women's sport, while also highlighting a lack of attention to community and developmental levels of female participation.

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of online sports magazines in the given timeframe. It means that the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Hungarian sports media. However, similar patterns are identified in the publication style of other outlets elsewhere in this study.

HU2.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As mentioned previously, the Hungarian sample included a total of 16 editions that featured female athletes. The analysis of the articles in the sample revealed six instances of sexist language (37.5%) All of these practices occurred in the player.hu magazine, which is the more

sensation-seeking outlet, out of the two. Its discriminatory terminology emphasised the female athletes' looks or their life outside the sporting field.

Three articles (18.8%) – all published on player.hu – trivialised the performance of female athletes by downplaying their achievements. Four editions (25%) contained reference to gender stereotypes, all published on player.hu. Three of them suggested that the athletes' success is linked to their appearance – two in the sport of volleyball, one in swimming. One edition published an article with heavy gender stereotyping by suggesting traditional gender roles, referencing the athlete's assumed emotionalism and that she is secondary to men.

In five editions (31.3%) there were occurrences of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes in the content, all published on player.hu. In four of them the articles focused more on the athletes' appearance over their abilities, had inappropriate or unnecessary commentary on the body used objectifying language that reduces the athletes to their look. One article even used provocative language unrelated to sport.

It is important to note that these findings refer to a very limited and specialised sample, which does not reflect the full breadth of Hungarian online sports media. Even though there were occurrences of female athletes' biased portrayal, all of them were published on player.hu, which is rather a tabloid-like online platform with a sport section than a sports magazine.

These results are aligned with research elsewhere in the study that suggest that sport-focused media outlets tend to showcase female athletes for their performance over their appearance or off-the-court life, however, their overall visibility remains limited.

HU2.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

In the sample of 16 articles that mentioned female athletes in Hungarian online sports magazines, two (12.5%) exhibited negative framing. Both of them did that by highlighting sanctions, both on player.hu.

This result suggests that, within this limited subset, women were portrayed in a generally respectful and affirmative manner, as 14 editions (87.5%) used positive framing.

Figure 23 presents the categorisation of textual positive framing.

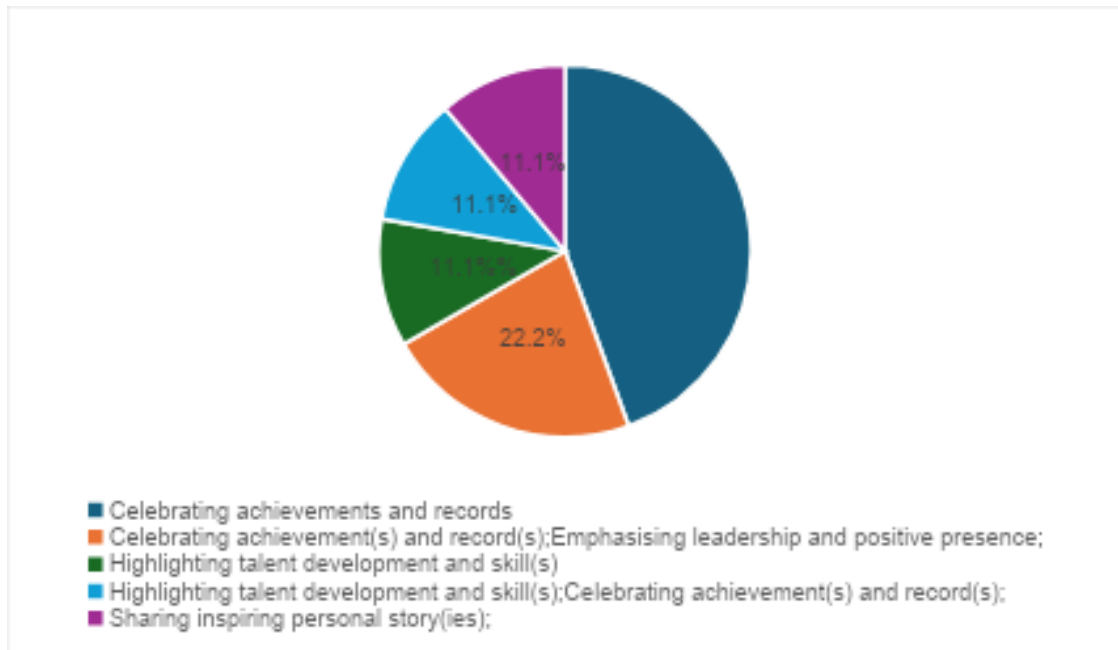


Figure 23 Categorisation of positive framing text (n=9)

On the other hand, nine editions (56.3% of all editions that featured female athletes) used positive framing. Four editions (25%) celebrated the achievements and records of female athletes as the sole positive framing pattern. Two (12.5%) not only celebrated such achievements, but also emphasised their leadership and positive presence. One (6.25%) celebrated their records and highlighted talent development and skills. One (6.25%) did only the latter as its positive framing pattern. One other edition (6.25%) shared their inspiring personal stories.

It is worth noting that these results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size. The findings align with results elsewhere in this study; predominantly showcasing female athletes' achievements on the sporting field, but occasionally emphasising their looks and private life matters over their career in sport.

HU2.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

All 16 articles that featured female athletes in the Hungarian sample included at least one image of the mentioned athletes, confirming a 100% inclusion rate. In 12 of these articles (75%), there was only one image. In the remaining four articles (25%), more than three images were identified. These findings suggest that, although the presence of images is consistent, more extensive visual representation (i.e. multiple images) occurs in only a quarter of the cases. Still, the visual inclusion of female athletes, when they are represented in the content, appears to be a regular editorial practice within the analysed outlets.

HU2.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the images

Among the 16 analysed articles containing images of female athletes, in only one instance (6.3%) was the athlete's performance trivialised by downplaying her achievements. In three occasions (18.8%) gender stereotypes occurred in the photos, suggesting that the athletes' success is linked to their appearance. In five instances (31.3%) the images represented sexualisation or objectivation of the female athletes. In all five cases it was done by focusing on their appearance over their ability, by inappropriate or unnecessary representation of their body and by objectifying representation that reduced the athletes to their look. In three cases, additionally the photos showcased posed, provocative representation unrelated to sport performance.

It is worth mentioning that all of these photos were published on player.hu, the tabloid-like magazine. In the articles on sporttime.hu no instances of sexist language, gender stereotypes, objectification, sexualisation or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visuals.

No cases of negative framing were observed, suggesting a tendency to avoid discriminatory or demeaning visual practices when female athletes are represented in this type of specialised publication.

On the other hand, eight images (50%) displayed positive framing, showcasing an appreciative approach to portraying women in sport. The identified categories of positive framing reflect themes such as talent, leadership, success, and inspiring stories. The remaining eight images (50%) were neither negative nor positive but were instead framed in a neutral manner, offering representation without clear evaluative cues.

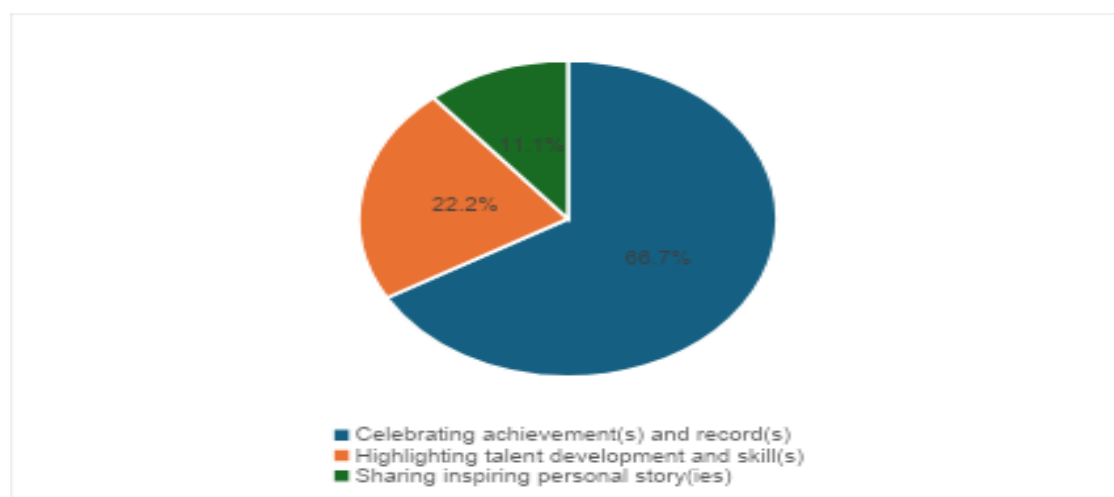


Figure 24 Categorisation of positive framing of images (n=9)

These visual representations are consistent with the patterns observed in the textual content, reinforcing positive symbolic attributes such as celebrating achievements (6 – 66.7%), highlighting skills (2 – 22.2%) and inspiring personal stories (1 – 11.1%).

Although the sample is small, the data suggest a favourable editorial trend when female athletes are visually featured.

HU2.5.2. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the positive framing of female athletes, we analysed the 8 articles from the Hungarian sample of online sport magazines that included positive visual representations of women in sport. This qualitative subsample is notably small and therefore requires cautious interpretation, yet it provides relevant insights into symbolic media representations.

Two main variables were considered in the analysis:

- *Image size*: coded based on the visual coverage in the article (i.e. less than ¼ of the article, ¼ of the article, half of the article, and more than half of the article).
- *Positive framing in the image*: identified through previous qualitative codification into categories such as “Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)”, “Highlighting talent development and skill(s)” and “Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)”.

Table 86 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 86 Cross-tabulation of image size and positive framing categories (n=8)

Image size	Positive framing categories	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a quarter of the article	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	1	12.5%
A quarter of the article	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	2	25%
	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	12.5%
	Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)	1	12.5%
Half of the article	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	12.5%
More than half the article	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	2	25%

The analysis of eight online sport magazine articles featuring positive visual representations of female athletes reveals no clear correlation between image size and the type of positive framing. While larger images (half or more of the article) were slightly more likely to highlight achievements, similar content was also present in smaller formats. This suggests that positive portrayals are not necessarily linked to visual prominence in this sample. However, due to the very limited number of cases (n=8), the findings must be interpreted with caution. Notably,

celebration of achievements emerged as the most frequent framing theme, often in connection with Hungarian female successes at the 2024 Paris Olympics, reflecting a symbolic appreciation of their performance regardless of image size.

HU2.6. Synthesis of the findings of sport magazines articles

The analysis of online sports magazines in Hungary, focusing on two outlets (player.hu and sportime.hu), **reveals a mixed picture regarding the representation of female athletes**. Out of 19 articles published between June 2024 and February 2025, 84.2% mentioned female athletes, suggesting a relatively high inclusion rate. However, in most cases, women were the subject of only one article per edition, whereas male athletes consistently received greater volume and editorial focus. **This reinforces the trend of symbolic underrepresentation already observed in other media formats across the broader study.**

In terms of tone and framing, **the majority of articles featuring female athletes were positively oriented, with 87.5% using affirmative narratives that celebrated achievements, highlighted leadership or talent, or shared inspiring stories**. Only two articles (12.5%) demonstrated negative framing, both of which were linked to sanctions. Nonetheless, the portrayal of women was not free of bias: articles published on player.hu frequently employed sexist language, gender stereotypes, and objectification. In contrast, no such instances were found in sportime.hu, indicating that the tone and quality of representation vary substantially between outlets, especially between tabloid-like and more specialised sports media.

Visual representation followed similar trends. All 16 articles that featured female athletes included at least one image, with 50% displaying positive framing — most commonly celebrating achievements. Yet half of the images remained neutral, and five instances (31.3%) exhibited sexualised or objectifying visuals, again exclusively on player.hu. No negative visual framing was observed, and sportime.hu maintained a respectful visual standard, free of gendered bias. These findings suggest that while the inclusion of images is consistent, their framing strongly depends on editorial style and the outlet's values.

Finally, an exploratory analysis of eight positively framed visual portrayals found no significant correlation between image size and framing type. Celebratory narratives were found across all image sizes, from small thumbnails to larger visuals. However, due to the small sample size, these results must be interpreted with caution. Notably, many of the positive portrayals were tied to Hungarian female achievements at the 2024 Paris Olympics, highlighting a potential editorial tendency to elevate women's sport primarily during major international events.

Overall, while there are promising signs of progress in the online media space, particularly within specialised outlets, the findings underscore the ongoing need for more consistent, inclusive, and unbiased representation of female athletes in Hungarian digital sports journalism.

HU3. Social Media: X Profiles' Analysis

This section analyses the presence and representation of female athletes in posts published on Hungarian profiles on the platform X (formerly Twitter), within the framework of the POWER project. This stage seeks to understand how institutional and individual profiles within the sports sector contribute (or not) to the visibility of women in the digital space, with particular focus on X, one of the most widely used social media platforms by federations, clubs, journalists, and athletes for the dissemination of real-time sports content.

The analysis focuses on a single day randomly selected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for a punctual yet revealing examination of gender dynamics within the posts. Data collection followed a common protocol established by the POWER project, considering Hungarian profiles with relevant activity on the platform. Two institutional media profiles with a high number of followers were chosen: one specialising in sport (*NSOnline*) and the other a generalist (*tenyek_tv2*). The sport platform had around 13.5k followers, whereas the general news account had around 7.6k at the time of the analysis.

HU3.1. Number of analysed posts per X Profile

Table 87 presents the distribution of the 58 analysed posts in the Hungarian case study, according to the institutional X profiles from which they originated. Two high-follower national profiles were included: *NSOnline*, a sport-specialised news outlet, and *Tények*, a general TV news programme's X profile.

Table 87 Distribution of the posts per X account

News Outlet	Is this a sports specialised account?	Number of the posts	Percentage
NSOnline	Yes	31	53.4%
Tenyek_TV2	No	27	46.6%
Total		58	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of posts from both profiles, enabling a comparative analysis between a sport-focused and a general news outlet. *NSOnline*, as a sport-dedicated platform, represents most posts (53.4%), which may reflect its consistent output of sports-related content. However, the significant inclusion of *Tenyek_TV2* allows for an assessment of how women's sports are represented outside specialised contexts.

HU3.2. Period of the data collection

Table 88 presents the distribution of the 58 articles by their month of publication. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 88 Distribution of the posts per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	6	10.3%
July/24	6	10.3%
August/24	6	10.3%
September/24	6	10.3%
October/24	6	10.3%
November/24	6	10.3%
December/24	6	10.3%
January/25	7	12.1%
February/25	9	15.5%

The analysed days are well distributed over time, covering all seasons, peaking in February 2025 (15.5%). The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 89 shows the distribution of the 58 days analysed according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 89 Distribution of the posts per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	9	15.5%
Tuesday	8	13.8%
Wednesday	8	13.8%
Thursday	7	12.1%
Friday	8	13.8%
Saturday	7	12.1%
Sunday	11	19%
Total	58	100%

There is a noticeable concentration of articles published on Sundays (19%), possibly reflecting editorial routines related to weekend sports reporting.

HU3.3. Number of X posts dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of posts on platform X dedicated to male and female athletes on the days when data were collected, shown in Table 90.

Table 90 Mention of athletes on the X accounts

Do the X posts mention athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
No	21	36.2%
Yes - only males	5	8.6%
Yes - only females	2	3.4%
Yes - both	30	51.7%
Total	58	99.9%

It is noteworthy that, out of the 58 analysed days of the dataset, 21 (36.2%) did not have any sport-related content, and all it linked to *Tények's* account. On the other hand, 30 days (51.7%) covered sports news on both genders, all of them published on the sports-focused *NSonline*.

Table 91 provides some insights into female athletes' representation in these X posts. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of days covered with no mention of female athletes is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility within the sports media landscape.

Table 91 Mention of female athletes on the X accounts

Do the X posts mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	56.9%
No	25	43.1%
Total	58	100%

33 days (56.9%) mentioned female athletes, which is a high ratio, given the fact that 21 days (36.2%) did not mention sports at all. Table 92 shows the number of posts dedicated to male and female athletes.

Table 92 Post numbers dedicated to male and female athletes (n=58)

Number of posts	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	22	25
One	6	7
Between 2 and 4	-	13
Between 5 and 8	-	5
More than 8	30	8

In the Hungarian case study, a total of 58 days' posts were analysed, distributed across nine months. There is a clear divide between the sport-specific and the general platform in their sports' coverage, which is understandable given the profile of these two outlets. All the days

with more than eight posts about both male and female athletes were found on *NSOnline*, the sport-focused account. Looking at the daily coverage of sports, in general, posts about male athletes outweighed the number of posts about female athletes.

These figures refer exclusively to the 58 posts analysed from Hungarian institutional and media profiles on X, within the framework of the POWER project. **While they do not reflect the entirety of sports communication in Hungary or on the platform, the data suggest that female athletes are underrepresented compared to their male counterparts, which means that gender imbalance on social media coverage still exists in the accounts analysed.**

HU3.4. Analysis of female athletes' X posts

Out of the full set of observations, 33 posts (56.9%) were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the X posts from Hungarian profiles (*Tények* and *NSOnline*). These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of online media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured. The results are shown in Table 93.

Table 93 Characteristics of posts featuring female athletes in Hungary (n=33)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	16	48.5%
	Individual sports	14	42.4%
	Team, individual and mixed team sports	3	9.1%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	2	6.1%
	Olympic	7	21.2%
	Professional	20	60.6%
	Professional, Olympic	2	6.1%
	Amateur, Olympic	1	3%
	Grassroot, Amateur, Professional, Olympic	1	3%

Team sports were slightly more prominent than individual sports, appearing in 48.4% of the X posts. In terms of competitive level, most posts focused solely on professional athletes (60.6%). Solely Olympic level-athletes were presented in seven cases (21.2%), while solely amateurs were talked about twice (6.1%).

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of the X profiles, the general news site of *Tények* and the sport-specific account of *NSOnline*. While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Hungarian sports media, they are aligned with patterns identified elsewhere in this study: a tendency to publish more about male athletes and communicate more about professional sports than amateur sports.

HU3.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X posts

As previously mentioned, data collection in Hungary identified 33 X posts that included references to female athletes. 29 (87.9%) covered sport-related content, whereas 4 (12.1%) talked about female athletes outside of sport. The textual analysis of these posts did not reveal any explicit examples of sexist language or derogatory expressions based on gender, neither did they trivialise female athletes' performance. Gender stereotyping occurred in two cases (6.1%). One did it in the form of questioning the athlete's femininity, the other assumed emotionalism on the athlete's part. These types of narratives reinforce outdated perceptions and deserve critical attention in the context of broader editorial practices.

It is worth highlighting that no cases of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes were identified in the content of these posts, which may indicate a positive development in sports discourse regarding the coverage of women. However, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution, as the sample is relatively small and was taken from only two news outlets' X accounts.

19 posts (57.6%) included positive portrayals of female athletes, whereas two (6.1%) showcased negative framing. In one of those cases the publication put emphasis on the athlete's physical limitations and highlighted disciplinary issues. In the second case, the post talked about disciplinary issues solely.

Figure 25 presents the forms of positive framing of female athletes in the sample. The predominant positive framing was celebrating achievements and records as this framing occurred in 11 posts (57.9%) on its own and in further two with other positive framings. These other framings included highlighting talent development and skills (in the total of three tweets), emphasising leadership and positive presence and sharing inspiring personal stories.

Such representations point towards a tendency to value the role and accomplishments of women when they are made visible in sports media discourse.

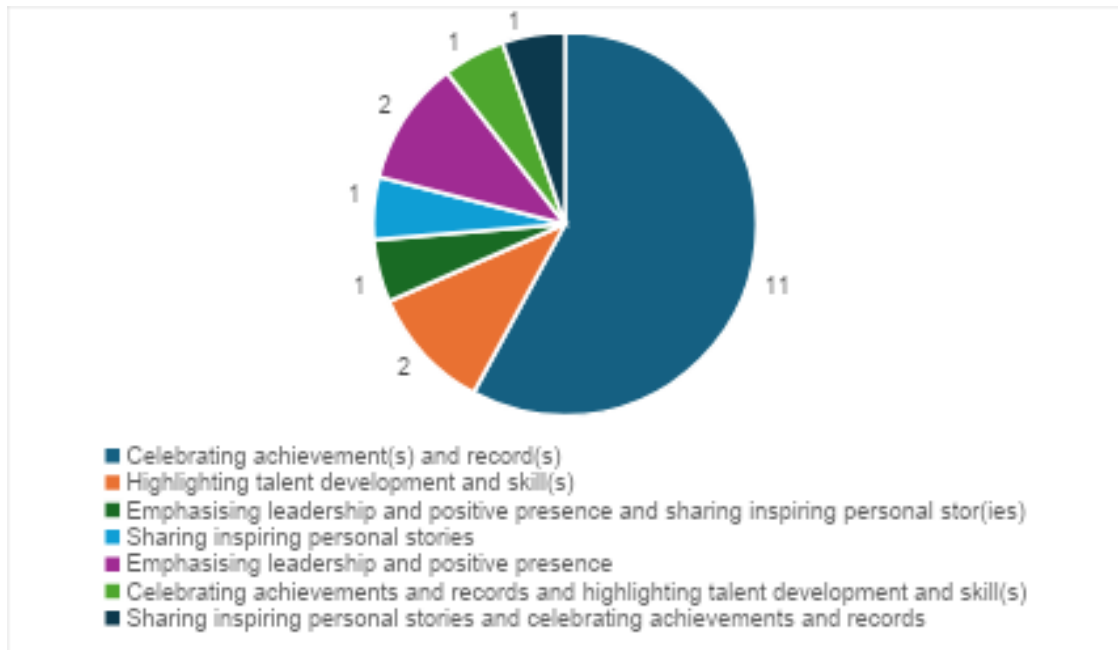


Figure 25 Categorisation of positive framing text (n=19)

Although these findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of the Hungarian social media landscape, they provide an indicative picture of how female athletes are represented in the analysed X profiles. The low incidence of negative stereotypes or objectification, combined with the frequency of positive portrayals, may serve as an important indicator.

HU3.5. Presence and number of images in the X posts

All 33 X posts that mentioned female athletes were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 17 posts (51.5%) did not include any images. 15 posts (45.5%) included at least one picture of female athletes, whereas one post (3%) was illustrated with a picture of a man. These figures mean that a considerable proportion still did not use imagery, which may limit the visual impact and visibility of female athletes on social media. The presence of images is particularly relevant for strengthening the representation of women in sport, especially on platforms such as X, where visual content is central to reach and audience engagement. It is important to note that these findings refer to a limited sample of Hungarian profiles analysed within the present study and should not be generalised to the entire digital sports media landscape.

HU3.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X posts' images

Among the 15 X posts with images mentioning female athletes, no cases of trivialisation of performance were identified in the visual representations. Two posts represented sexualisation or objectification of female athletes in the form of focusing on appearance over ability. Both posts were illustrated with a close-up of the female handball player's face instead

of an action shot from the game in the post. In one case gender stereotyping was found in the form of assumed emotionalism, as the image presented two handball players from opposing teams, one comforting the other after their game against each other.

Only one post (6.7%) presented negative framing, related to sanctions or disciplinary issues depicted in the image. 13 posts (86.7%) used positive framing in their imagery. Figure 26 shows the sub-categories of positive visual framing of these posts.

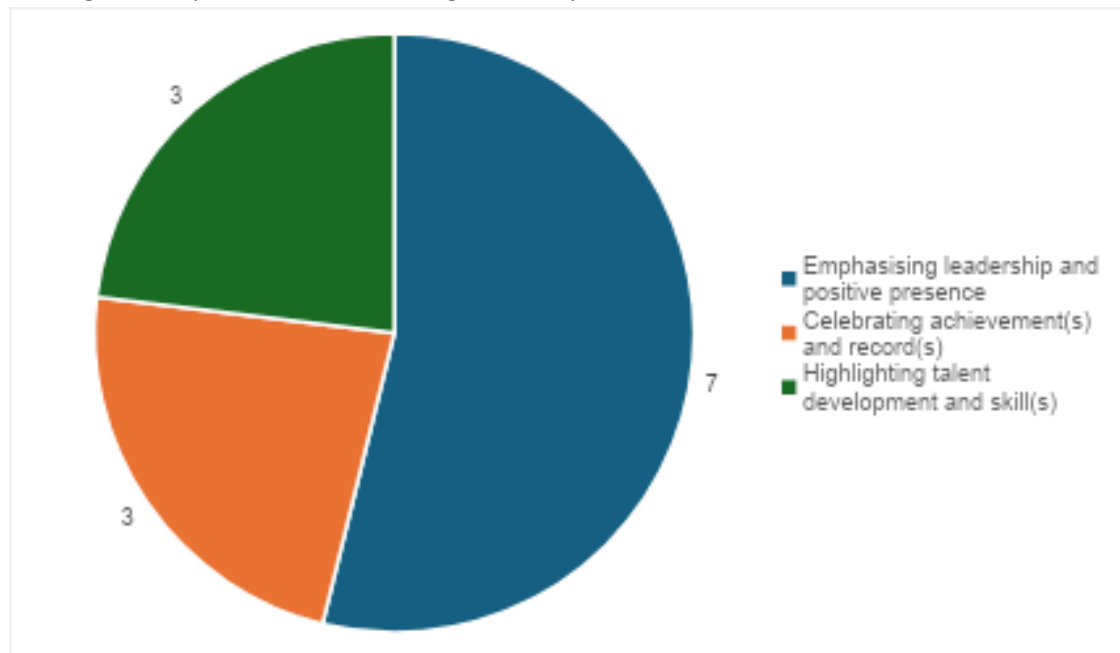


Figure 26 Categorisation of positive framing in imagery (n=13)

Seven imagery used positive framing by emphasising leadership and positive presence of female athletes, which is 53.8% of all imagery with positive framing. Three posts celebrated female athletes' achievements (23.1%), while another three highlighted talent development and skills. All these pictures reinforced symbolic traits associated with merit, leadership or inspiration. Although the sample analysed is limited, the very limited presence of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes and their gender stereotyping may indicate a more respectful and constructive approach in the digital coverage examined.

HU3.6. Synthesis of the findings of X posts

The analysis of Hungarian profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project, offers valuable insights into the digital representation of female athletes. The findings highlight **a slight gender imbalance in sports coverage, with 25 posts (43.1%) not mentioning female athletes at all**. It is important to note that 22 (37.9%) did not contain any mention of male athletes either. These indicate the general news outlet's limited sports coverage. Regarding the coverage of solely the sports-focused outlet, only one day passed in the analysed period

without a post of female athletes. These patterns are like those identified elsewhere in this study: the slight dominance of male athletes' presentation in Hungarian media outlets.

Despite this imbalance, **the tone and content (both textual and visual) of the posts did not show explicit examples of sexist language and there were barely any instances of objectification or sexualisation.** Furthermore, the majority of these posts featured positive framing, highlighting leadership, achievement, talent or inspiration. This suggests that, when included, female athletes tend to be portrayed with dignity and merit.

However, these findings should be interpreted considering the analysis' limitations. The sample is small (n=58) and is based on only two institutional X profiles, which do not fully reflect the editorial strategies of these outlets or the broader complexities of gender representation in Hungarian sports media. Additionally, the limited number of posts restricts the possibility of conducting inferential statistical analyses. While it is possible to identify descriptive trends, the sample is not sufficiently robust to support generalisations or statistically valid hypothesis testing.

Finally, **the data suggest that female athletes remain underrepresented in the Hungarian digital sports media landscape, even on platforms like X that offer opportunities for more immediate and inclusive content dissemination.** Future research with larger samples, a broader range of profiles (i.e. athletes, federations), and longer timeframes will be essential to confirm these trends and promote a more equitable visibility of women in Hungarian sport.

HU4. Online TV episodes' Analysis

This analysis focuses on the Hungarian subset of online television news episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025, conducted within the framework of the POWER project. The study investigates the visibility and framing of female athletes in sports-related news segments broadcast by national television channels.

HU4.1. Number of analysed episodes per TV channel

Table 94 outlines the distribution of the 43 analysed news episodes across two major national broadcasters: *M1* and *RTL+*. *M1* represents Hungary's state-funded public service broadcaster and typically reflects a government-aligned editorial stance. In contrast, *RTL+* operates as a leading commercial channel and is generally characterised by a more critical approach toward government policies and a broader representation of societal perspectives. The inclusion of both public and commercial broadcasters allows for a comparative understanding of editorial practices within differing institutional and political frameworks.

Table 94 Distribution of the episodes per channel

TV Station	Number of Episodes	Percentage
RTL+	21	48.8%
M1	22	51.2%

The sample is relatively balanced across both channels, allowing a comparative analysis. The public national channel, *M1* news accounts for just over half of the sample (51.2%), suggesting slightly more frequent inclusion of this channel's episodes.

HU4.2. Period of data collection

Table 95 presents the distribution of the 43 episodes by their month of broadcast. The analysis spans from June 2024 to February 2025, covering various seasons and news cycles.

Table 95 Distribution of the episodes by month

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	4	9.3%
July/24	6	14%
August/24	4	9.3%
September/24	4	9.3%
October/24	7	16.3%
November/24	4	9.3%
December/24	4	9.3%
January/25	6	14%
February/25	4	9.3%

The distribution is well spread over the months. October 2024 had the highest concentration of coded episodes (16.3%), while most of the months included four episodes (9.3%).

Table 96 shows the distribution of episodes according to the weekday they were aired. This allows the identification of editorial routines or trends related to specific days.

Table 96 Distribution of the episodes by weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	14%
Tuesday	6	14%
Wednesday	6	14%
Thursday	8	18.6%
Friday	7	16.3%
Saturday	6	14%
Sunday	4	9.3%

There is an even distribution (6-8 frequency) across weekdays, with Thursday having the highest percentage (18.6%). This suggests consistent coverage of sports news throughout the week, without a strong editorial focus on any day.

HU4.2. Analysis of female athletes' TV reports and news sections

Out of the entire sample, only seven episodes included any mention of female athletes. Within those seven news episodes a total of nine news items/reports covered female athletes. Importantly, all of these news items/reports focused on news related to the 2024 Summer Olympics and Paralympic Games. These new items/reports form the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how female athletes are represented in Hungarian televised news. The key results are presented in Table 97.

Table 97 Characteristics of news items/reports featuring female athletes

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the report sport-related?	Team sport	2	22.2%
	Individual sport	3	33.3%
	Team sports and individual sports	4	44.4%
Type of sport featured	Swimming	2	22.2%
	Water polo	2	22.2%
	Boxing	2	22.2%
	Handball	1	11.1%
	Fencing	1	11.1%
	Judo	1	11.1%

Competitive level of athletes	Professional/Olympic	9	100%
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All reports were directly related to sport, primarily focusing on typical successful Hungarian Olympic sports disciplines from swimming to fencing. There were no references to grassroots-level athletes and all featured athletes were professionals competing at the Olympics.

HU4.3. Sexist language and gender stereotypes

The majority of analysed news segments did not trivialise or undermine the performance of female athletes. Instances of overt gender stereotyping were limited to two cases, both associated with the sport of boxing. Specifically, these involved coverage of a match between Algerian boxer Imane Khelif and Hungarian athlete Luca Hámori. In both reports, the Algerian athlete's femininity was implicitly questioned, with emphasis placed on her masculine appearance. Notably, no news segment included sexualised or objectifying representations of female athletes, which marks a positive deviation from trends observed in earlier media studies.

Of the nine news segments featuring female athletes, seven (77.8%) portrayed them in a positive light. These reports typically celebrated their sporting achievements, with a particular focus on performances at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Within this subset, three reports (approximately 43%) further highlighted the leadership qualities and strong public presence of female athletes, while one segment placed emphasis on talent development and athletic skill.

Conversely, two of the nine segments were assessed as neutral in tone. However, one of these centred on potential disciplinary measures against Imane Khelif, portraying the Algerian athlete in a relatively negative context. This suggests that, while positive framing is dominant, negative or stereotype-led portrayals may still emerge under specific circumstances, particularly when involving athletes who challenge traditional gender norms.

HU4.5. Gender presence and airtime in TV sports reporting

Out of the 43 analysed news episodes:

- 17 episodes (39.5%) featured at least one segment focused on male athletes;
- 7 episodes (16.3%) included female athletes.

The total estimated airtime dedicated to female athletes across all broadcasts amounted to approximately 10 minutes. Importantly, nearly the entirety of this coverage was concentrated on performances at the 2024 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. This temporal and thematic concentration underscores the limited and event-driven nature of women's representation in televised sports news.

The data reveal a marked imbalance in both the presence and editorial emphasis afforded to male and female athletes. Male athletes were featured in over twice as many episodes as their female counterparts. Furthermore, even when female athletes were included, their coverage tended to be significantly shorter in duration. Interestingly, female Paralympic athletes received more airtime than their male peers, which may be attributed to the higher number of medals won by Hungarian women at the Paralympic Games—a variable worth further exploration in future research.

Overall, the cumulative airtime of just 10 minutes allocated to women's sports across multiple months and broadcasters illustrates the ongoing marginalisation of female athletes in the televised news media. This limited visibility reinforces broader patterns of symbolic under-representation and underscores the need for more sustained and structured editorial strategies aimed at achieving gender equity in sports journalism.

HU4.6. Synthesis of the findings of TV episodes

The analysis of Hungarian television broadcasts reveals **significant limitations in both the visibility and framing of female athletes within televised journalism**. It is important to acknowledge that the number of coded news episodes was relatively small (n=43), with only seven episodes making any reference to female athletes, comprising a total of nine news segments. This limited sample size necessitates caution in interpreting the findings and prevents broad generalisations about the wider Hungarian media landscape. Nevertheless, the data indicate a persistent gender imbalance, aligning with previous research and existing empirical evidence. While male athletes appeared in nearly 40% of the analysed episodes, female athletes were featured in only 16.3%.

Moreover, the total estimated airtime devoted to female athletes amounted to just 10 minutes, primarily covering achievements at the Paris Summer Olympics and Paralympics. These results suggest that the presence of women in televised sports news remains sporadic and marginal, largely confined to major international events such as the Olympics, and is clearly not part of a consistent editorial approach.

However, **when female athletes were included, their portrayal was generally positive**. The coverage tended to emphasise athletic performance, accomplishments, and talent, with only two instances of gender stereotyping or negative framing. Both cases were related to the same boxing event, featuring the previously mentioned Algerian athlete with a masculine appearance. This points to an editorial tendency to avoid overtly discriminatory narratives, focusing instead on the successes of female athletes, particularly within the context of high-profile competitions. Nevertheless, such positive framing does not address the deeper issue of structural under-representation. Recognition without regular and sustained visibility continues to contribute to symbolic marginalisation.

In conclusion, while the tone of Hungarian TV coverage may be shifting in a more positive direction, the frequency and depth of female athletes' representation remain inadequate. Tackling gender imbalance in sports media therefore requires more than equitable framing—it demands a consistent, diverse, and structured inclusion of female athletes within the daily media agenda.



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HU5. Focus Group Analysis

HU5.1. Details of the organised focus group

Date: 2/4/2025

Place: In person

Objective: Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media, discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media

No of participants: 10

Profile of participants: The Hungarian focus group included:

- Two female athletes;
- Two journalists;
- Two other media professionals;
- One content creator;
- Three additional participants from the sport sector (a former male athlete who is working in a sport federation; one media professional working at a news agency and one sport manager who is also an amateur athlete).

Five women and five men were included in the focus group for gender balance. Their age range also shows diversity: two participants were below 35 years old, four were between 36 and 45 years old, while four were above 45 years old. This diversity allowed the researchers to provide the perspective of several generations in Hungarian sport.

Figure 27 presents the process of the Hungarian focus group session from preparation to data input.

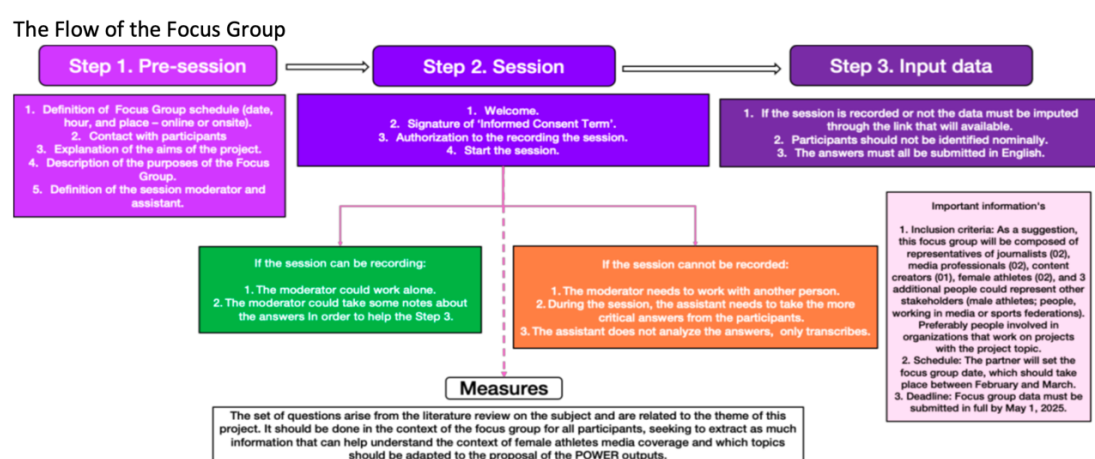


Figure 27 Flow of the Hungarian focus group session

In Table 98, the ten focus group participants are introduced.

Table 98 Focus Group Participants – Profile Summary

Code	Gender	Professional Role / Affiliation	Relevant Background	Inclusion Category
P1	Female	Freelance sports journalist. She works for online magazines, contributes to books and social media pages.	Over 25 years' experience in sports journalism, advocating for women's empowerment in sport.	Journalist
P2	Male	Journalist, currently working for a national sport federation	Over 25 years' experience in sports journalism.	Journalist
P3	Male	TV commentator of several summer and winter sports	Over 20 years' experience in sports journalism and commentary.	Media professional
P4	Male	Multiple award-winning freelance sports photographer, who has worked for print and online newspapers.	Despite his young age, he has covered various individual and team sports domestically and internationally as well. He understands the changing trends in the visual coverage of sports in various types of outlets.	Media professional
P5	Female	Head of Content for a women's magazine and has a large following as an individual on social media where she shares sport-related content, too.	In her own social media and podcast, she talks a lot about the female (athlete's) body.	Content creator
P6	Female	Amateur summer sport athlete in an individual sport. She also works for a professional cycling team.	Female athlete who works with male athletes as a sports manager. She also works with communication.	Female athlete
P7	Female	Amateur winter sport athlete in a team sport who also works as an umpire in major sport events of her sport.	She has a background in an individual and a team sport and she also works as an umpire internationally.	Female athlete
P8	Female	Former communication staff member of a national sport governing body, currently sport manager at a company and amateur athlete.	She has experience in various types of organisations in Hungarian sport (i.e. national governing body, company, sport club)	Additional stakeholder (sport manager and amateur athlete)
P9	Male	Sports editor at a news agency	Over 15 years' experience in sports communication working with various sports.	Additional stakeholder (sports editor at a news agency)
P10	Male	Former Olympian in an individual sport, decision-maker in a national governing body and sport facility.	Over 30 years' experience in Hungarian sport in different roles.	Additional stakeholder (former high-performance athlete, decision-maker and sport facility manager)

HU 5.2. Thematic Analysis

Table 99 Thematic analysis from Hungary

Category 1: Inequality in Media Coverage		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
There is a difference in the amount of TV coverage between male and female athletes.	Several participants agree that there is inequality in TV coverage between men's and women's sport. Men's sport being the dominant.	P1, P2, P5
Media supply responds to demand.	In general, men's disciplines are more popular and more entertaining, that is the reason they are in the media predominantly. In some cases, coverage of women's sport is artificially oversupplied, due to societal trends and pressure from sport governing bodies.	P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
Media coverage depends on the quality of the competition as well.	In most disciplines, the men's competition is of higher quality than the women's. This is one of the reasons they are in the media.	P7, P9
In the Hungarian 2024 Paralympic team, women dominated the competitions and the media.	Women won 12 out of the 15 medals, and they were more extroverted when talking to the media.	P8
There might be a difference between men's and women's desire to be in the public eye.	Coverage also depends on whether the athlete wants to appear in the media or not. There might be a difference between the genders in this regard. For instance, male tennis player Marton Fucsovics tries to avoid media appearances, whereas some female players seek it.	P2, P7
Category 2: Money is an important factor		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
There are easier ways to earn money than to keep working hard as an athlete.	Young athletes often see an easier money-making path in front of them, instead of doing the hard work in sports, hoping that they'll become world-class athletes. Social media content creation or becoming a cyclist courier are some of these alternatives.	P2, P3, P6, P10



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Special dynamics in tennis.	There's an artificially created balance in prize money between men and women, even though men have to win more sets at Grand Slams to earn proportionally less money. Mixed doubles also gets huge prize money, even though it is not popular among fans.	P1, P2, P9
Media coverage depends on what viewers are willing to pay for.	The more viewers a TV programme has, the more income it generates for the channel. This is the base of TV programming.	P7, P10
Category 3: Stereotypes and Sexualisation		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
The focus is often on women athletes' looks, not their performance.	When traditional media highlights women athletes' bodies, instead of their performance, it often makes them struggle mentally. Sexualisation can be found anywhere in the media, not only in sports.	P1, P3, P4, P5, P7
Some women athletes take advantage of their appealing body on social media.	Tennis players, such as Fanny Stollar and Eugenie Bouchard and some other female athletes use their social media to showcase their body in a sexualised way to gain followers and sponsors. Men usually don't seek this kind of additional fame and income.	P1, P2, P5, P6
Female athletes are challenging dress codes in some women's disciplines.	In some sports, women athletes' clothes are so revealing that adhering to the dress code causes them a lot of stress, especially while they are on their period. Therefore, they started going against the dress code regulations.	P1, P3, P7
Today's consumer culture revolves around sexualisation of women athletes.	In today's culture, the sexist approach to the coverage of women's sport is the reality. The media is also shaping consumer culture into this direction.	P10
Male athletes' bodies are often sexualised, too.	Viewers like seeing male athletes' perfect bodies as well. Their coverage is sexualised, too, in some instances.	P2, P4, P6, P7, P9
Category 4: Focus on stories rather than results		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Clickbait titles grow readership but mislead readers.	Giving clickbait titles for big readership is not new, but a very common phenomenon. It can cause harm to the athletes, their relationship to the media and even to their coaches.	P2, P3, P9
Conscious approach to dealing with media is important, but rare.	Athletes, often very young ones, don't have a conscious and strategic approach to what to communicate about themselves and/or they lack a strong moral value system. That is why their entourage – for instance, their parents, a content manager – is important.	P1, P3, P5, P7, P9, P10

Creating gossip stories for clicks is a trend. They are easier to understand than the sporting results.	When there is nothing to talk about, the media makes up a story. For instance, the romance between tennis players Alexandra Eala and Coleman Wong. It is also easier to build stories than to explain nuanced sporting achievements.	P2, P3, P7
The athletes' personality matter when it comes to their media relations.	How marketable the athlete is, how good they are with media, depend on their personality. Examples from tennis, cycling and speed skating.	P8, P9
Sports documentaries are popularising sports and athletes.	Sports documentaries are entertaining, but often contain misleading information, which can be damaging.	P2, P3, P6, P9
Category 5: Positive changes in women's sport and media		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Journalists are filtered to protect women athletes.	Some sports organisations and event organisers only give accreditation to credible media representatives to make sure the coverage is unbiased and of high quality.	P2, P8
Cultural gaps are being narrowed.	Formerly unimaginable steps are taken towards women's empowerment through sport, for instance, in the Arabic world.	P2, P10
The new IOC President is a woman, This is a step in the right direction.	To have a female president of the IOC is the result of decades of hard work in women's empowerment in sport.	P2
Mixed disciplines are showcasing cooperation among genders.	These new disciplines in various sports have awareness-raising power and entertaining aspects. However, their sporting value is questioned.	P1, P2, P7



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Category 1: Inequality in Media Coverage

The participants acknowledged that female athletes continue to receive less media coverage compared to their male counterparts. This is due to men's competitions being more entertaining and of higher quality. TV programming reacts to the demand of viewers, but female sports often get more screen-time than what the demand dictates, due to societal trends. Coverage also depends on the athletes' willingness to appear in the media. An exception to the male-dominated coverage trend in Hungary is the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. As P2, a male journalist put it, *"In some sports, women's sport is not as entertaining. It's true even for the women's football World Cup, even though it reached a certain level of entertainment. (...) I think that in sports where the quality of women's competition is lower, the quality needs to develop for the media coverage to develop."*

Implication: This imbalance perpetuates the invisibility of female athletes and hinders the public's perception of their legitimacy and value. Without equal representation, female athletes remain at a disadvantage in achieving recognition, securing sponsorships and inspiring future generations. Some further artificial oversupply of women's sport can have a positive impact on viewership, it but could also demotivate viewers from watching the channel.

Category 2: Money is an important factor

Money plays a significant role in several areas of sport. It is important when it comes to career decisions of young athletes and to programming decisions of TV channels. Young athletes often leave the sporting career hoping for an easier and more well-paying job. TV channels put on their programme what viewers would like to see. When it comes to prize money in tennis, an artificially generated balance is created between genders, which receives controversial reactions. As P6, a female athlete said, *"I think that the desire to work is decreasing, and people are gravitating towards the easy road of making easy money fast. This is what I see on TikTok. 22-year-old people don't want to go to work anymore. They produce content on the internet and earn more money than I ever will. And it works."*

Implication: As athletes and media outlets try to generate more income, they are shaping the world of sport. Several talented athletes leave behind the hard work of being a professional athlete and opt for easier jobs. It means less sporting success stories and less role models for the upcoming generations. The more high-quality and entertaining women's disciplines become, the more likely that they will be interesting enough for TV viewers.

Category 3: Stereotypes and Sexualisation

According to the participants, the sexualised coverage of female athletes in traditional media is present, and it is part of today's consumer culture. This trend can make these athletes struggle mentally. In some sports, female athletes are going against the overly revealing dress codes, which also causes them stress. However, some women athletes self-sexualise on their own social media profiles in the hopes for more attention and income. It was also pointed out that male athletes' bodies are sexualised as well. As P7, a female athlete explained, *"When female athletes are not concentrating on their performance but on what the photographers will take photos of,*

and that media coverage will be about that, they won't be able to perform at their best.” She added, “Let's be honest, we don't necessarily watch men's water polo because of the number of goals either.”

Implication: Such sexualised framing of female athletes in the media reinforces gender roles, undermines athletic performance and causes mental challenges for the athletes. The overly sexualised portrayal of both genders in sport may discourage young people from identifying with strong athletic role models.

Category 4: Focus on stories rather than results

Several participants shared the view that giving clickbait titles and making up stories for clicks are current media trends that are misleading and damaging the athletes. Sports documentaries can also be misleading as they are often created in a sensation-seeking way. The athletes' conscious approach to their media presence along with their personality is key to a healthy relationship with media. As P2, a male journalist said, *“I think that these days, the “story” becomes more important than the performance. In all aspects of life. We need stories. (...) It's easier to understand a story than to grasp the difference between running 100m at 9.87 or at 10.12.”* As P3, a media professional explained, *“Netflix generates stories all over the place. In the Formula 1 doc, some quotes weren't said when they were actually showed.”*

Implication: When the media fails to highlight athletic achievements, it devalues the performance of athletes and often misleads fans. This undermines efforts to promote sports as a space and meritocracy. However, it also grows viewership by “selling” the sports performance through stories, often with private-life elements in them.

Category 5: Positive changes in women's sport and media

The participants identified some positive developments in women's sport and in how media treats women's sport. One of them is rejecting media accreditation requests from journalists who might not cover the competition in an unbiased and non-stereotypical way. Another development is introducing several women's disciplines in the Arabic world, introducing mixed-gender disciplines in various sports and having the first female IOC president. As P1, a female journalist put it, *“Mixed teams and mixed doubles is important, as in everyday life, we don't need feminists and sexists, we need cooperation - both in sport and in life. Sport can show it in a nice way how men and women can cooperate along shared values.”*

Implication: Due to the work of several sport governing bodies – i.e. the IOC, the WTA –, steps are taken in women's empowerment in sport. The mixed-gender disciplines are relatively new and need improvement to have the same entertaining power as non-mixed disciplines. More positive changes are needed in the realm of women's empowerment in sport across the globe. Some positive examples are in front of us.

HU5.4. Word cloud analysis

To complement the thematic analysis, we created a word cloud based on the frequency of terms mentioned across participants' contributions in the focus group. Prepositions and adverbs were excluded to focus only on meaningful content words. The final list was refined to include only terms that aligned with the thematic categories established in our analytical framework. This visual representation in Figure 9 offers an intuitive overview of the key ideas and concerns discussed, with the most frequently mentioned terms appearing in larger font sizes.



Figure 28 Word cloud from the thematic analysis

Synthesis of the findings – Hungary

The cross-format analysis conducted in Hungary **reveals a slight under-representation of female athletes compared to male athletes in sports media**. It is important to highlight that the 2024 Summer Olympics fell into the timeframe of data collection, which would typically be expected to increase media coverage of sport, including women's sport. **Across newspapers, online magazines, the social media platform X and television news, women's presence was limited, fragmented, and largely confined to high-performance contexts**. Hungary has a strong tradition in several female-dominated individual and team sports, – such as kayaking, swimming, fencing, modern pentathlon, handball and water polo –, yet the presence of these women's disciplines was limited in the media. The dominant presence of men's football in the national sports news agenda appears to exacerbate this disparity, often overshadowing other disciplines and further marginalising female athletes.

In the print media sample, editions of two general and two sport-specific newspapers were analysed. 162 out of 169 editions included any mention of athletes. Out of these 162 editions, 136 (84%) covered news of female athletes and 121 (74.7%) had at least two articles about women's sport. Most of this news about women athletes focused on high-level sport – both individual and team sport –, celebrating athletes' achievements. However, textual gender stereotyping occurred in 25 cases (18.4%) and 14 articles (10.3%) contained textual references to sexualisation or objectification of women athletes. Similar patterns were noticed in the choice of images illustrating these news articles. While the level of coverage of women's sport was high, the high percentage of gender stereotyping and sexualisation of women athletes is concerning.

In the case of online sports magazines, namely *player.hu* and *sporttime.hu*, 19 entries were analysed. Whereas all of them contained reference to male athletes, only 16 referred to female athletes (84.2%). 11 editions had only one article about women's sport, while all 19 editions published minimum two articles about men's sport. It means that the dominance of men's sport in these online magazines is clear. Most articles about female athletes focused on professional and Olympic-level sport, and there was no difference in the coverage of individual and team sports.

The analysis of social media focused on posts from the institutional X (formerly Twitter) accounts of *NSOnline*, a sport-specialised news outlet, and *Tények*, a general TV news programme. Out of 58 posts, only 37 mentioned athletes at all (63.8%). Female athletes were mentioned in 33 (56.9%). **These posts were mostly short, often without images, and mostly concentrated on performance or achievements of high-level athletes in both team and individual sports.**

The textual analysis of these posts did not use sexist language or derogatory expressions based on gender, neither did they trivialise female athletes' performance. Gender stereotyping occurred in only two cases (6.1%). **While the absence of sexualisation and the limited presence of stereotypical language is positive, the dominance of men's sport in the news raises questions about editorial priorities and digital engagement strategies.**

Hungarian television coverage presents a clear case of marginalisation: out of 43 news episodes analysed, only seven included any reference to female athletes, accounting for just nine segments and an estimated 10 minutes of airtime. Although the tone was generally positive and focused on achievements—mostly during the Paris Olympics—the representation of women remains sporadic and limited to exceptional events. With female athletes featured in only 16.3% of episodes and minimal visibility overall, the findings highlight the absence of a consistent editorial approach to gender equity in televised sports journalism.

Finally, the focus group discussions reinforced the patterns observed across formats. The participants agreed that there is an inequality in the coverage of men's and women's sport in traditional media, and oftentimes the coverage is sexualised. The trend of female athletes' self-sexualising on social media was noticed, and the participants agreed that it is a source of financial opportunities for them. Positive trends were also noticed in women's empowerment in sport, but the lack of institutionalised regulations help outlets use misleading story-telling practices. This can cause harm for the athletes' mental health and relationship to their entourage and media as well.

It is essential to acknowledge that some of the samples were small, which limits the possibility of drawing general conclusions. Nevertheless, the consistency of the findings across different formats, platforms, and content types points to a structural issue in the Hungarian media landscape. Recognition without regular, diverse, and meaningful visibility continues to reinforce symbolic marginalisation. Addressing gender imbalance in sports media therefore requires not only the elimination of stereotypes, but above all the integration of female athletes into the daily news agenda in a sustained and strategic manner.

“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Italy



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Introduction

In Italy, the **sporting landscape remains gender-imbalanced in terms of participation and representation**. Despite gradual improvements in female athletes' participation – representing 47% of 2024 Italian Olympic Team in Paris –, leadership positions in sports remain overwhelmingly male-dominated. Currently, there are only 2 female presidents of national sport federations and women represent just 14,3% of sport federation board members. At grassroots level, only 19,6% of clubs are led by women. In the coaching domain, women make up merely 20,7% of registered coaches. Furthermore, although the scenario has been changing in the last years, women's participation is not duly reflected in media visibility or institutional leadership.

Media representation remains particularly skewed. Female athletes continue to receive limited attention, although their representation seems to have improved in terms of stereotypical and objectifying contents.

IT1. Newspaper Magazine Analysis – Print Media

This initial analysis refers to the newspapers under review. A sample of 43 newspaper editions published in Italy between June 2024 and February 2025 was analysed, with data collection taking place between February and April 2025.

IT1.1. Number of analysed articles per newspaper

Table 100 presents the distribution of the 90 articles analysed in the Italian case study, according to the newspaper of origin. Editions from four widely circulated national publications were included: “Il Fatto Quotidiano”, “Corriere della Sera”, “Corriere dello Sport” e “Quotidiano Sportivo”. While the latter two are sports-specialised newspapers, the former are generic news outlets.

Table 100 Distribution of the articles per journals

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of the articles	Percentage
Il Fatto Quotidiano	No	9	10%
Corriere della Sera	No	25	27.8%
Corriere dello Sport	Yes	36	40%
Quotidiano Sportivo	Yes	20	22.2%
Total		90	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of articles at least from three of the four outlets, enabling a comparative analysis between editorial profiles. “Corriere dello Sport”, being sports-focused, accounts for the highest share (40%), potentially indicating a greater inclination

toward sports content. The significant inclusion of generalist newspapers is crucial to understand how sport — particularly women’s sport — is portrayed in non-specialised media.

IT1.2. Period of the data collection

Table 101 presents the distribution of the 90 articles by their month of publication. Data were collected from articles dated between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 101 Distribution of articles per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
Jun/24	13	14.5%
Jul/24	20	22.2%
Aug/24	27	30%
Sep/24	0	0%
Oct/24	5	5.6%
Nov/24	11	12.2%
Dec/24	7	7.8%
Jan/25	4	4.5%
Feb/25	3	3.4%
Total	90	100%

The articles analysed cover mainly the 2024 summer period, due to wider availability of editions found and higher frequency of articles dedicated to female athletes. On the one hand, concentration in June, July and August 2024 (counting for over 66% of total numbers of articles) may reflect increased sports coverage due to major events or pre-Olympic preparations, while on the other hand a slight increase in November 2024 (12.2%) could be due to successful results achieved by Italian female tennis players. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 102 shows the distribution of the 90 articles according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 102 Distribution of the article per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	25	27.8%
Tuesday	10	11.2%
Wednesday	0	0%
Thursday	11	12%
Friday	5	5.6%
Saturday	22	24.5%
Sunday	17	18.9%
Total	90	100%

There is a noticeable concentration of articles published on Mondays and Saturdays (27.8% and 24.5%), possibly reflecting editorial routines related to weekend sports reporting. The presence of articles on Sundays is also significant (18.9%), showing again consistent sports coverage throughout the weekend. No articles were analysed on Wednesdays and very few on Fridays due to limited number of available editions published in these days of the week.

IT1.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of articles dedicated to male and female's athletes per newspaper edition. The data are grouped into ranges based on the observed volume of coverage. It is worth noting that only one edition included no reference to male athletes, while the remaining included from 2 to over 8 articles on male athletes.

Table 103 indicates whether each of the 43 analysed editions included any mention of female athletes - the variable is dichotomous (yes/no) – and Table 104 represents the amount of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per each edition.

Table 103 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	70%
No	13	30%
Total	43	100%

Table 104 Amount of articles dedicated to male and female athletes in the editions analysed

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	2	13
One	2	4
Between 2 and 4	15	20
Between 5 and 8	11	6
More than 8	13	0

30% of editions did not contain any article on female athletes, while editions not mentioning male athletes were only 4.7%, clearly demonstrating the dominant presence of men's sport in newspaper coverage

Almost all editions analysed (91%) included from at least 2 to more than 8 articles focusing on male athletes, however the surprising result is that the editions that gave visibility to female athletes (70%) contained a number of articles comprised between 1 and 8 per edition.

This represents a contradiction against general tendencies of gender disparity in sports journalism. A reasonable explanation could lie in the fact that Italian female sport has been going through a period of consistent success started last year with the Olympics and other top results, especially in tennis and volleyball.

When women were represented, the coverage was usually limited to two to four articles per edition, which is remarkable, however no edition contained over 8 articles dedicated to female athletes, while, on the contrary, editions comprising more than 8 articles on male athletes were 13, revealing a striking imbalance.

In most cases, women are either entirely absent or only marginally present in sports coverage, compared to men. Editions with more than four mentions remain extremely rare, pointing to a fragmented visibility. This pattern reinforces, however only partially, the broader diagnosis of the marginalisation of women in Italian sports journalism.

IT1.3.1. Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes in Italy

A calculation was conducted on a sample of 43 newspaper editions analysed in Italy, collected between June 2024 and February 2025, with the aim of comparing the average number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes during this period. The results show that, on average, each edition contained 5,48 articles about male athletes and only 2,09 articles about female athletes.

The data collected in Italy reveal a substantial difference in the average number of articles per edition between male and female athletes. The average number of articles about men is more than two and a half times higher than that of women, highlighting a clear and persistent asymmetry in media coverage. The very large effect size for male athletes confirms intense and consistent visibility, whereas the female presence, though statistically significant, remains inferior. These findings reinforce the notion that sports journalism continues to overwhelmingly favour the male gender, relegating women to peripheral positions on the news agenda.

IT1.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the 43 editions analysed, 90 articles were identified in Italy that included any mention of female athletes. These articles constitute the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in sports journalism. The following section examines various aspects of these 90 articles.

Table 105 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Italy (n = 90)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the article sport-related?	Yes	88	97.7%
	No	2	2.2%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	25	27.7%
	Individual sports	65	72.2%
Competitive level of athletes	Olympic/Professional	75	83.3%
	Grassroots	15	16.6%

Most articles featuring female athletes (97.7%) are directly related to sport, indicating that women's presence in the media is usually linked to their sporting roles.

Among the articles featuring female athletes, there is confirmed predominance of individual sports (72.2%) compared to team sports (27.7%). This may suggest a tendency within the media to highlight individual performances — particularly in Olympic or solo disciplines. However, these data indicate that women's sport, when covered, is not only limited to one competitive format.

There is a clear tendency to highlight performances of athletes at professional and Olympic levels, together making up 83.3% of the coverage. This suggests that visibility for women in sport is largely confined to high-performance contexts. Grassroots-level athletes are significantly underrepresented, appearing in only 15 cases — a finding that limits public recognition of the diverse spaces in which women engage in sport.

IT1.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As already mentioned, data collection in Italy identified 90 female athletes' articles. Analysis of these texts revealed only a few instances of sexist language (10%), or the use of derogatory expressions based on gender. This suggests that, in the cases where women are included, journalistic discourse tends to avoid discriminatory terminology. Only 1 article (1.1%) among those analysed trivialised the performance of a female athlete, specifically through the framing of "downplaying achievements". Although statistically isolated, this case illustrates how symbolic devaluation practices can still occur, even within content that ostensibly aims to highlight female figures in sport.

Regarding gender stereotypes, only one of the 90 articles presented such content. *The same is true for sexualisation or objectification in the text, which were detected only in two articles.* While this may indicate a positive evolution in journalistic discourse, it is important to note that the sample already derives from a relatively small subset of articles that effectively include women – which may skew the data towards a more positive representation than what is seen across the broader media landscape.

IT1.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

Among the 90 articles analysed, only 4 (4.4%) included negative framing of the female athlete, focusing the narrative on injuries or failures. On the other hand, all articles demonstrated positive framing of female athletes, except 8 mentions, which conveyed a "neutral" framing.

The qualitative categorisation of positive framing revealed the following main patterns. For example, in over 50% of the positively framed cases the text highlighted the athletes' talent and celebrated their achievements. 20% of the articles shared personal and inspirational stories, while 15% focused also on emphasising leadership.

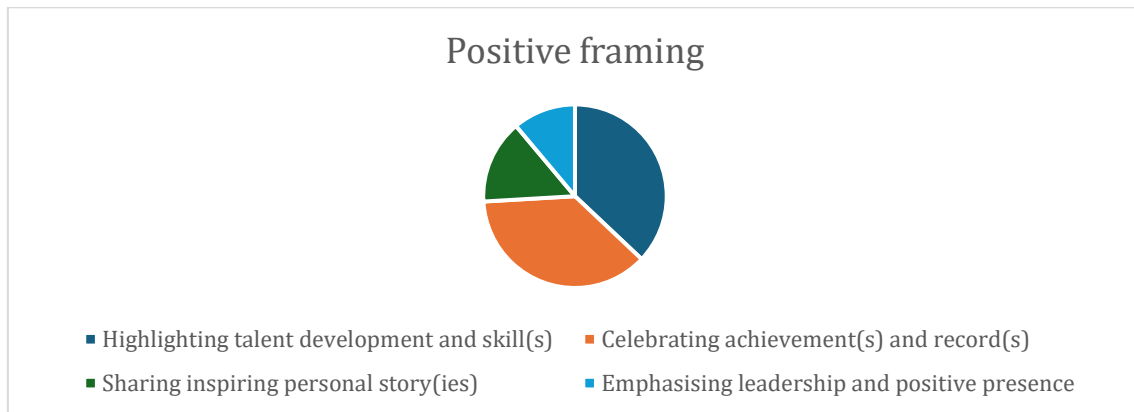


Figure 29 Categorisation of positive framing text

The data in Figure 29 indicate that the recognition of performance and the attribution of positive traits such as talent, leadership, and inspiration are the most common forms of positive textual framing found in the articles from Italy.

IT1.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

Among the 90 editions that featured female athletes, 50% of the articles included at least one image of the mentioned female athlete, in 38.8% of cases there was only one image, in 22% of cases two or more images were identified, indicating that some reports used more extensive visual sequences.

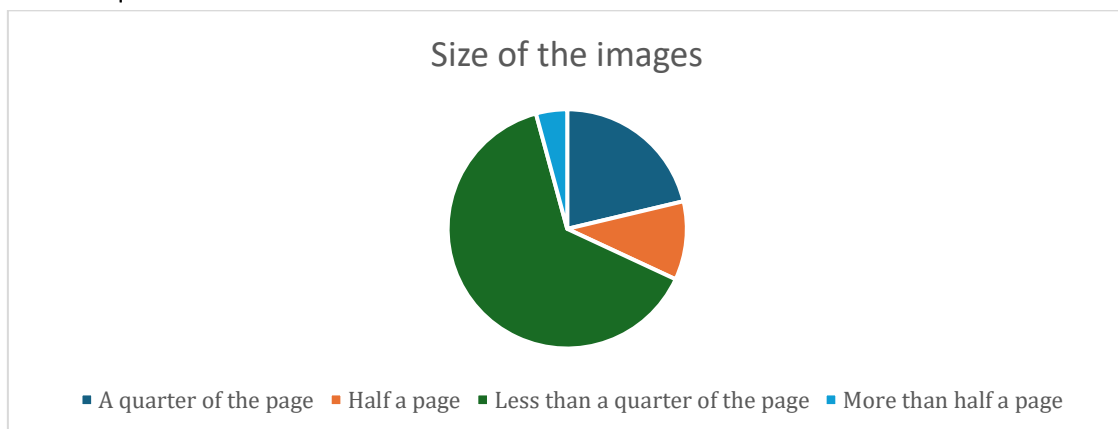


Figure 30 Size of the images

Regarding the size of the images, there was a clear predominance of smaller visual formats (see Figure 30). These findings suggest that, even when female athletes are visually represented, the images tend to occupy modest editorial space, potentially limiting their impact.

IT1.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the image

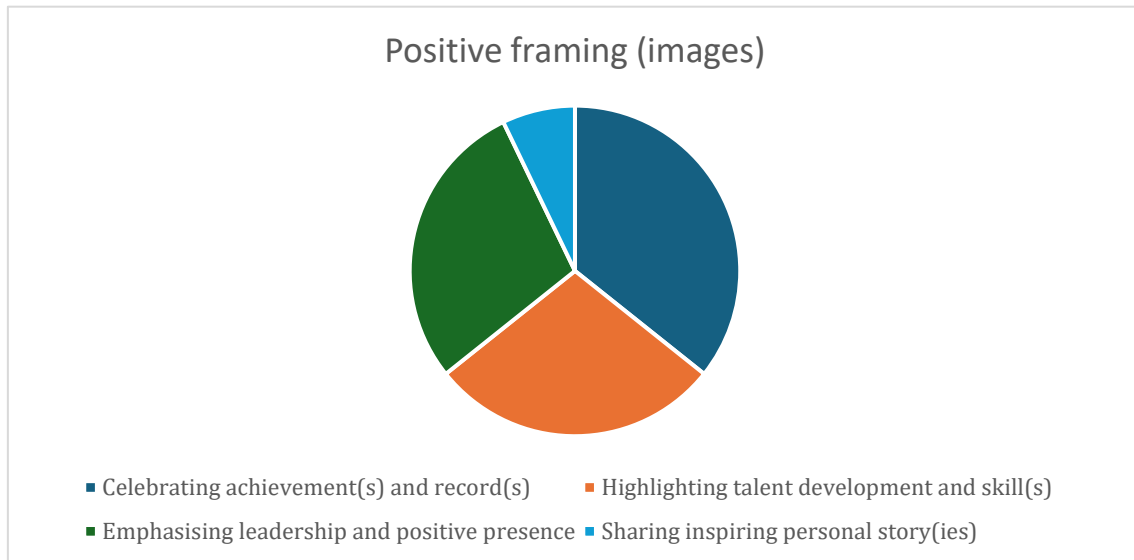


Figure 31 Categorisation of positive framing images

Among the 45 articles containing images of female athletes, only a few cases of sexualisation, objectification, gender stereotypes, or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visuals. Only 3 articles (6.6%) presented negative framing, linked to visual references to injuries or failures. On the other hand, all the remaining articles (93.3%) visually framed female athletes in a positive light.

IT1.5.2. Negative and positive framing in the images

Achievements celebration was the most frequent framing, present in nearly half of the cases (55.5%). Talent highlighting and emphasis on leadership were found in 44.4% of cases, while articles containing inspiring personal stories represented only 11.1% of cases. Visual framing tends to reinforce symbolic attributes associated with performance, talent and leadership, maintaining consistency with the patterns identified in the textual content.

With the aim of deepening the qualitative analysis of the positive media representations of female athletes, a bipartite network visualisation was created using Gephi software (version 0.10.1). The network was constructed by cross-referencing a sample of 57 headlines of news articles with the previously coded thematic categories of positive framing, such as “celebrating achievements and records”, “highlighting talent development and skills”, “emphasising leadership and positive presence” and “sharing inspiring personal stories”.

For this purpose, the network nodes were organised into two distinct types: article headlines and thematic categories, allowing a visual representation of the relationship between the published content and the symbolic framings attributed to the athletes. The connections (edges) indicate the presence of a specific category within a given headline.

The data were organised in one spreadsheet listing the nodes and, after importing the file into Gephi Software (V. 0.10), the connections (edges) were inserted manually one by one. Following importation, the ForceAtlas 2 layout algorithm was applied, as it is particularly suitable for networks that exhibit a modular or community-based structure.

The colour and size of the nodes were also adjusted to facilitate visual distinction between the

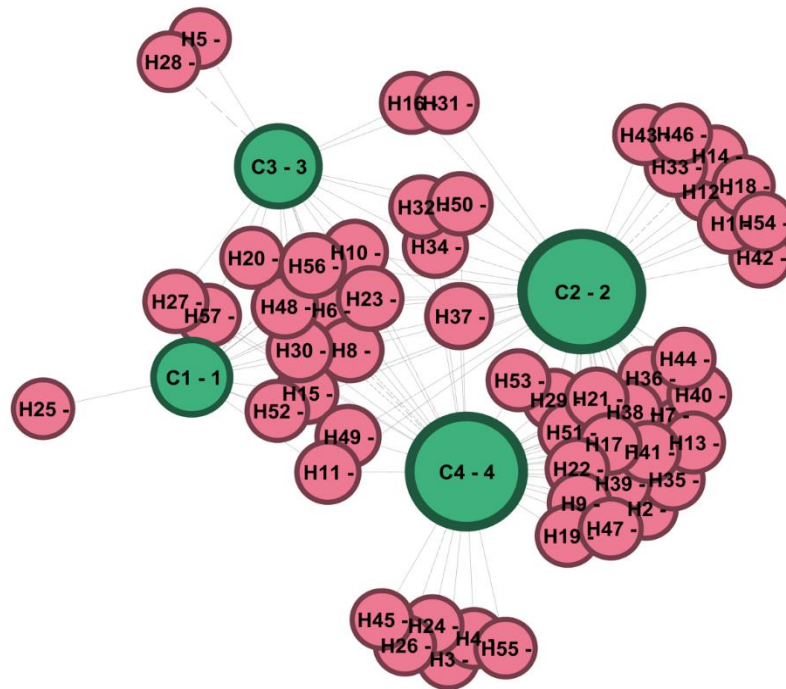


Figure 32 Network between headlines and positive categories

two node types and to highlight their relative importance within the network, with green used to represent the categories and pink for the headlines. This methodological step enabled a visual identification of patterns of co-occurrence, density of connections, and semantic centrality within the journalistic discourse, clearly revealing the main forms of symbolic appreciation attributed to female athletes in the analysed headlines.

Table 106 Code, Categories and Headlines

COde	Category and Headlines
C1	Emphasising leadership and positive presence
C2	Highlighting talent development
C3	Sharing inspiring personal story
C4	Celebrating achievement and records
H1	Le Olimpiadi e la boxe: la diceria di Roccella, che genere di ministra
H2	L'oro delle ragazze, l'orgoglio di Jacobs
H3	Lin come Khelif batte l'avversaria che mima la "X": "Io sono donna"
H4	Pallanuoto - Il Setterosa perde anche con la Spagna ma passa ai quarti. Oggi il Settebello

H5	Melma nei camerini all'Opera di Roma: punite le danzatrici
H6	Errani e Paolini: la storia sono l'oro
H7	Siamo stracontenti. E che peccato per Pilato
H8	Errani e Paolini, il trionfo vale doppio. Dalla super coppia la vittoria più bella
H9	Le azzurre sfatano anche il tabù della Turchia
H10	Brignone irresistibile, supera anche tomba. "Mi gusto le emozioni"
H11	Busto, ironia record. La rivincita...corale
H12	La Fcredil domani ritrova il passato: Verona è allenata dall'ex Zappaterra
H13	C'è anche Jasmine. Finals al completo
H14	Jannik prenota il Capodanno da n.1. Machac, che regalo: Alcaraz è out, Sinner domina Medvedev in Cina. E Paolini è già pronta per le finals
H15	Goggia ok al ritorno nella prima prova di discesa negli Usa. Brignone prima
H16	Gilli, ipovedente d'oro. "Nuoto per nonna Rina"
H17	Onda azzurra sui Giochi
H18	Non solo Bolelli e Vavassori
H19	Azzurre forza 10, superata la Serbia
H20	Farfalla, Walsh fa il record mondiale
H21	Bj King Cup - Le azzurre vogliono il pass per la finale. Sfida alla Polonia della n. 2 Swiatek
H22	Conegliano travolge la VeroVolley
H23	Mamma che Errigo! Show alla Tamberi
H24	Roma, la Marchetti ribalta il derby
H25	Giochi subito in salita. La super Turchia nel girone dell'Italia
H26	Conegliano da 10, Milano dominata
H27	Garbin, che partita la vita. "Ho lottato con speranza anche per le mie ragazze. Ogni giorno al massimo"
H28	Scherma, stupro atleta: sospesi i due colleghi
H29	Proteste e schiacciate perse, ma cicliste dal cuore d'Oro
H30	Nadia dei miracoli, Diaz che favola
H31	Jasmine inciampa a due passi dal cielo
H32	Noi abbiamo Fede
H33	Brignone, la prima discesa da trenta e lode. "E' quando si fa dura che so dare il massimo"
H34	Parigi è sempre la terra di Paolini. Ora tocca a Vavassori e Cocciaretto. Berrettini vince anche a Kitzbuhel
H35	Salukvadze alla decima Olimpiade
H36	Parigi, ieri 1 oro e 2 argenti
H37	Cindy in fuga dai pregiudizi. Una medaglia per i rifugiati
H38	Cagliari entra nella leggenda
H39	Furlani, Simonelli, Fantini: carica azzurra
H40	Tricolori elite: l'azzurra Carini vince a Seregno

H41	Gasparri, Castellani, Osti, Bertuzzi e Gelli subito protagonisti
H42	Paolini è n.5 - Musetti torna in Top20: è 16
H43	Fiorellini terza al Ladies Italian Open
H44	Stavolta Gimbo si mette in pausa
H45	A Nagano Fontana quinta all'esordio
H46	Il Progresso alle 19 a Reggio Emilia
H47	Giro rosa thriller: Longo Borghini ha 1" su Kopecky
H48	Guazzini e Consonni conquistano l'oro nella Madison. Prova spettacolare e un po' "folle" di ciclismo su pista. Battuta Tokyo
H49	Paolini non tradisce a arriva Musetti
H50	Prima medaglia per la squadra dei rifugiati
H51	Oro Von Bredow, argento Werth. Come a Tokyo
H52	Oggi con Wierer e Pellegrino
H53	Setterosa in raduno a Napoli. Sabato test con il Canada
H54	Fabbri stasera torna in Polonia (SkySport, 19). Poi gareggerà agli Assoluti come Jacobs e Simonelli
H55	Europei, Italia giù dal podio: ragazze quarte
H56	Sofia sbaglia ma resiste e pensa già ai prossimi Giochi
H57	L'abbraccio fra le "figlie dell'Iran" censurato da Teheran

The network analysis revealed several key elements:

Thematic centrality: The categories “Celebrating achievement and records” (C4) and “highlighting talent development and skills” (C2) stand out as the most connected nodes, appearing in multiple headlines. This result reinforces the dominance of a success and merit-based narrative as the primary form of media recognition for female athletes.

Other relevant categories: The categories “Sharing inspiring personal stories” (C3) and “Emphasising leadership and positive presence” (C1) also show high connectivity, forming thematic clusters around the symbolic appreciation of athletes as models of excellence and inspiration.

Headlines with multiple connections: Many headlines are linked to more than one or to all categories, which demonstrates the complexity of positive framing.

Semantic isolation and specificity: Some headlines, although positive, are connected to only one category. This may indicate more targeted and specific representations.

Visual distribution and clustering: The network formed visually distinct subsets, grouping headlines by thematic category. This clustering reinforces the idea that certain types of positive framing tend to appear systematically and consistently within the media discourse.

IT6. Final synthesis of findings of newspapers' articles

The analysis of Italian newspapers' articles, conducted within the framework of the POWER project, reveals a persistent **structural imbalance in the representation of female athletes**. Despite some encouraging findings — such as the near absence of sexist language, objectification, or stereotypical narratives — the presence of women remains quantitatively limited. Among the 43 print editions analysed, only 30 featured female athletes, indicating that their inclusion is still relatively exceptional and not part of a consistent editorial strategy. This under-representation reinforces symbolic marginalisation, reducing the visibility and legitimacy of women in sport within public discourse.

The use of Gephi proved effective in visualising and interpreting the connections between journalistic discourse and categories of symbolic appreciation, allowing for a structural reading of how female athletes are positively portrayed in the media. The network analysis showed that, although thematic diversity exists, the celebration of achievements and talent remains the central pillars of positive representations.

The data suggest that, **when female athletes are represented, they are generally framed in a respectful and positive manner, both textually and visually. Positive framing both in text and images is frequently associated with themes such as talent, skills, leadership, and achievement, potentially reflecting a deliberate editorial choice to highlight and celebrate their presence.** However, this positive treatment must be critically examined within the broader context of media exclusion: recognition without proportional visibility does not equate to equity. Addressing this imbalance requires not only fairer framing practices, but above all, a greater and more regular inclusion of female athletes in the sports media agenda.

IT2. Online sports magazines analysis

The sample of online sports publications analysed in Italy comprised only one specialised digital magazine called “Ultimo Uomo”, due to scarce availability of open-access archives of Italian online sport magazines. This platform represents a niche segment within the broader sports media ecosystem, focusing mainly on soccer but also on other sports.

A total of **18 editions** were analysed from this outlet, regardless of gender focus or athlete type, covering publication dates between June 2024 and February 2025. The selected articles span various weekdays and reflect the diversity of the editorial calendar across different seasons and sport periods.

IT2.1. Number of analysed editions and articles

The below table summarises the number of editions analysed and articles collected:

Table 107 Number of editions and articles analysed

Number of editions	Number of articles
18	10

The average number of articles per edition is normally 4, which establishes below 14% the percentage of articles on female athletes per edition of “Ultimo Uomo”. This illustrates the challenges in achieving gender-balanced representation even in niche or non-mainstream online sport journalism, with male athletes consistently receiving the broad majority of dedicated articles. Among the editions analysed, only one exception – edition published on February 14th 2025 - included 50% of articles dedicated to female athletes.

IT2.2. Period of the data collection

Tables 108 and 109 present the distribution of the 18 editions analysed from “Ultimo Uomo” according to the month and day of publication. Data were collected from editions published between June 2024 and February 2025, offering a temporal snapshot across multiple seasons and editorial cycles.

Table 108 Distribution of the editions per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	2	11.2%
July/24	2	11.2%
August/24	2	11.2%
September/24	1	5.6%
October/24	2	11.2%

November/24	1	5.6%
December/24	2	11.2%
January/25	1	5.6%
February/25	5	27.8%
Total	18	100%

Table 108 shows that February 2025 accounted for the highest proportion of entries (27.8%), followed by a balanced distribution across other months. Each of the following months: June, July, August, October and December 2024 contributed 11.2% of the sample, while the remaining – September, November 2024 and January 2025 – contributed 5.6%. This relatively even distribution supports a comprehensive view of coverage patterns over time, mitigating the risk of seasonal bias.

Table 109 Distribution of the editions per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	3	17%
Tuesday	2	11.2%
Wednesday	4	22.5%
Thursday	4	22.5%
Friday	5	27.8%
Total	18	100%

Table 109 reveals that Fridays represented the most common day of publication (27.8%), followed by Wednesdays and Thursdays (22.5%). Other weekdays – Mondays and Tuesdays - represented smaller proportions of the sample (between 11.2% and 17%). The predominance of Friday publications could reflect editorial cycles that prioritise pre-weekend sports announcements or athlete features. The diversity in publication days adds robustness to the sample by avoiding overreliance on a single day or pattern of coverage.

IT2.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This section compares the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per each edition of the online sport magazine “Ultimo Uomo”. The data were grouped into ranges based on the volume of coverage observed. It is worth noting that all editions contained reference to male athletes.

Table 110 indicates whether each of the 18 analysed editions mentioned female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no).

Table 110 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	10	56%
No	8	44%
Total	18	100%

Notably, more than half of the editions (56%) included any mention of female athletes, while the minority (44%) excluded them entirely, which is relevant when considering the overall gender dynamics. This finding seems to highlight just a slight gender disparity within the online sports outlets analysed, however, the data about the overall percentage of articles on female athletes per each “Ultimo Uomo” edition – below 14% - confirm that women continue to be overlooked in the digital sports media space, regardless of the sports covered.

Table 111 presents the distribution of articles dedicated to male and female athletes across the 18 editions.

Table 111 Article’s numbers dedicated to male and female’s athletes

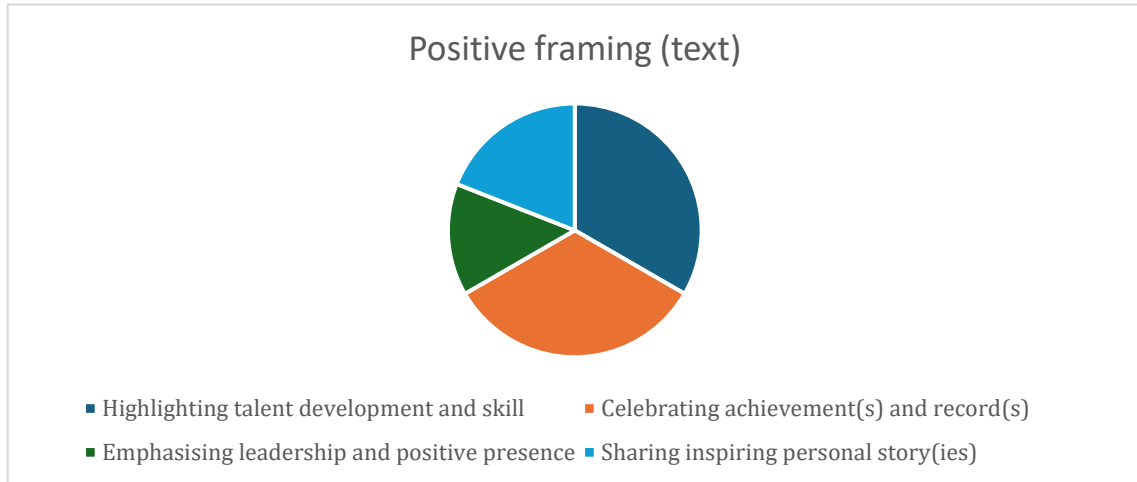
Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	-	8
One	-	8
Between 2 and 4	2	2
Between 5 and 8	16	-
More than 8	-	-

For male athletes, 16 editions (94.5%) featured five articles and the remaining 2 editions contained from 2 to 4 articles. Together, these account for 100% of all entries, revealing a dominant presence of male-focused sports content.

In stark contrast, almost 50% of the editions included no article dedicated to female athletes and, in general, when women were mentioned, the coverage was generally minimal: 8 editions featured one article and only two editions had 2 articles. No edition contained more than 2 articles related to women. These results reflect the marginal visibility of female athletes even in online platforms focused on specific sports domains.

From this sample and in this period, this analysis reinforces the broader finding of systemic underrepresentation of women in Italian sports journalism. The low frequency and superficial nature of female-focused coverage underscore the persistence of gender bias within both mainstream and niche digital sports media.

IT2.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles



Out of the full set of observations, 10 articles were identified that included a mention of female athletes. These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Figure 33 Categorisation of positive framing

Table 112 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Italy (n = 10)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	2	20%
	Individual sports	8	80%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	1	10%
	Grassroots	0	0%
	Professional	3	30%
	Olympic	6	60%

Individual sports were widely more prominent than team sports, appearing in 80% of the articles. Team sports — basketball and soccer — accounted for the remaining 20%. This suggests a modest tendency to highlight individual performance in niche or solo disciplines.

In terms of competitive level, most articles focused on Olympic athletes (60%). The limited presence of low-performance female athletes reveals an editorial gap in the coverage of amateur and grassroots women's sport, while also highlighting a lack of attention to community and developmental levels of female participation.

IT2.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As mentioned previously, the Italian sample included a total of 10 articles that featured female athletes. The analysis of these articles revealed a minority of instances (3 out of 10) of sexist

language or the use of derogatory expressions based on gender. This suggests that, at least within this specific subset of online sports magazines, journalistic discourse tends to avoid overtly discriminatory terminology.

None of the articles trivialised the performance of female athletes. No examples were found of language that diminished their achievements, presented them as less competent, or reduced their role to secondary importance. Similarly, there were no identifiable gender stereotypes or content that reinforced traditional gender roles within the analysed texts.

Importantly, there were also no occurrences of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes in the content, nor any instance in which women were negatively framed. These results point to an editorial tendency towards neutrality or respect in the treatment of female athletes when they are indeed represented.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these findings refer to a very limited and specialised sample, which does not reflect the full breadth of Italian sports media. While the absence of overtly sexist content is encouraging, it likely reflects the characteristics of the niche outlet included in this study rather than a broader transformation in media practices. These results are therefore aligned with previous research that suggests that female athletes tend to receive more neutral coverage when they are represented, although their overall visibility remains limited.

IT2.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

In the sample of 10 articles that mentioned female athletes in Italian online sports magazine “Ultimo Uomo”, none exhibited negative framing. This result suggests that, within this limited subset, women were portrayed in a generally respectful and affirmative manner, with no references to controversies, disciplinary issues, or criticism of performance.

On the other hand, the qualitative analysis of positive framing revealed six recurring patterns. The most frequent were two: sharing inspiring stories and the combination of celebrating achievements, highlighting talent development and sharing inspiring stories, both present in 20% of the articles. The remaining articles focused equally (10% in each case) on the following other positive framing categories:

- Celebrating achievements and records
- Highlighting talent development and skills
- Highlighting talent development and skills; Celebrating achievements and records; Emphasising leadership and positive presence
- Highlighting talent development and skills; Celebrating achievements and records

Although these results indicate a constructive approach to the portrayal of female athletes, they should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size. Moreover, the findings align with previous research showing that when women are included in sports media, their visibility

is often linked to exceptional performance, which may inadvertently reinforce the notion that women must “prove their worth” to earn media coverage.

IT2.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

All ten articles that featured female athletes in the Italian sample included at least one image of the mentioned athletes, confirming a 100% inclusion rate. Seven articles out of ten showcased from two up to more than three images, while three of the remaining contained more than which seems to confirm that visual inclusion of female athletes, when they are represented in the content, appears to be a regular editorial practice within the analysed outlets.

IT2.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the images

Among the ten analysed articles containing images of female athletes, no instances of sexist language, gender stereotypes, objectification, sexualisation, or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visuals. Likewise, no cases of negative framing were observed, suggesting a tendency to avoid discriminatory or demeaning visual practices when female athletes are represented in this type of specialised publication.

On the other hand, all the images (100%) displayed either positive or neutral framing, indicating a predominantly appreciative approach to portraying women in sport. The identified categories of positive framing reflect themes such as talent, success and inspiring stories.

These visual representations are consistent with the patterns observed in the textual content, reinforcing positive symbolic attributes such as talent, resilience, goal orientation and personal achievement. Although the sample is small, the data suggest a favourable editorial trend when female athletes are visually featured.

IT2.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the positive framing of female athletes, we analysed the ten articles from the Italian sample, all including visual representations of women in sport. This qualitative subsample is notably small and therefore requires cautious interpretation, yet it provides relevant insights into symbolic media representations.

Two main variables were considered in the analysis:

- *Image size*: coded based on the visual coverage in the article (i.e., less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half a page). In this case all images had the smallest size (less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page);

- *Positive framing in the image*: identified through previous qualitative codification into categories such as Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s), Highlighting talent development and skill(s), Emphasising leadership and positive presence, and Sharing inspiring personal story(ies).

Table 113 Cross-tabulation of image size and positive framing categories (n = 10)

Image size	Positive framing categories	Frequency
Small (< ¼ page)	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	4
	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	4
	Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)	2
	Emphasising leadership and positive presence	5

The cross-tabulation reveals that less-than-a-quarter-of-the-page images were associated with multifaceted framings, frequently combining multiple symbolic elements (e.g., leadership, talent, and celebration).

Methodological note

Given the limited sample size (n=10), this analysis remains exploratory and descriptive. Nonetheless, the preliminary patterns identified are consistent with broader trends observed in gender and media studies and may inform future investigations with larger datasets.

IT2.7. Synthesis of the findings for online sports magazines

The results of the analysis of online sports magazines in Italy **reveal certain limitations in archives consultation availability**. The only sports magazine analysed is called “Ultimo Uomo” and focuses mainly on soccer, especially male. Despite the usual content, the majority of analysed editions (10 over 18) mentioned female athletes and exhibited their positive images. Although specialised publications have the potential to offer more space to less mainstream disciplines, **this openness does not translate into gender-balanced representation**. Most references to female athletes focused on individual sports at professional and/or Olympic level, reinforcing the notion that women must “prove their worth” to earn media coverage. However, in the few cases identified—and in line with the previous analysis—the portrayals were positive, avoiding stereotypes or sexist language, both in the text and in the images.

From a visual perspective, all included images displaying positive framing, highlighting talent, achievements, leadership, and inspiring stories. Nevertheless, the small size of the sample (n=10) poses significant limitations and prevents the use of more robust statistical analyses. Despite this, the findings are consistent with those previously observed in the newspaper sample and offer relevant insights for future analyses based on larger and more diverse datasets.

IT3. Social media: X profiles analysis

This section analyses the presence and representation of female athletes in posts published on Italian profiles on the platform X (formerly Twitter), within the framework of the POWER project. This stage seeks to understand how institutional and media profiles within the sports sector contribute (or not) to the visibility of women in the digital space, with particular focus on X, one of the most widely used social media platforms by federations, clubs, journalists, and athletes for the dissemination of real-time sports content.

The analysis focuses on single days randomly selected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for a punctual yet revealing examination of gender dynamics within the posts. Data collection followed a common protocol established by the POWER project, considering Italian profiles with relevant activity on the platform. Two institutional media profiles with a high number of followers (between 200,000 and over 1 million) were analysed: one specialising in sport (*Sky Sport*) and the other a generalist (*Il Post*).

IT3.1. Number of analysed posts per X profile

Table 114 presents the distribution of the 85 analysed posts in the Italian case study, according to the institutional X (formerly Twitter) profile from which they originated. Two high-follower national profiles were included: *Sky Sport*, a sport-specialised news outlet, and *Il Post*, a generalist newspaper.

Table 114 Distribution of posts per X profile

X profile	Is this a sports specialised profile?	Number of posts	Percentage
Sky Sport	Yes	62	73%
Il Post	No	23	27%
Total		85	100%

Sky Sport, as a sport-dedicated platform, represents most posts (73%), which may reflect its consistent output of sports-related content. However, the inclusion rate of *Il Post* allows for an assessment of how women's sports are represented outside specialised contexts.

IT3.2. Period of data collection

Table 115 presents the distribution of the 85 posts by their month of publication. Data were collected from posts published between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 115 Distribution of the posts per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	6	7.06%
July/24	29	34.1%
August/24	11	12.9%
September/24	9	10.6%
October/24	8	9.4%
November/24	6	7.06%
December/24	4	4.7%
January/25	5	5.9%
February/25	7	8.24%

The posts are distributed over time, covering all seasons. A higher concentration in July 2024 (34.1%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to preparation for the Olympic Games. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 116 shows the distribution of the 85 articles according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 116 Distribution of the posts per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	9	10.6%
Tuesday	29	34.1%
Wednesday	2	2.35%
Thursday	20	23.5%
Friday	4	4.7%
Saturday	15	17.7%
Sunday	6	7%

There is a noticeable concentration of posts published on Tuesdays (34.1%), possibly reflecting editorial routines related to post-weekend sports reporting.

IT3.3. Number of X feeds dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of posts on platform X dedicated to male and female athletes on the days when data were collected. It is noteworthy that, out of the 30 daily feeds analysed for both profiles (60 feeds overall), 27 (48.3%) did not include any reference to female athletes (see Table 117).

The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of daily feeds with no mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility within the sports media landscape.

Table 117 Mention of female athletes in the profile daily feeds

Does the X feed mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	33	55%
No	27	45%
Total	60	100%

The majority of feeds (55%) included mention of female athletes, while 45% made no reference to them at all.

In the Italian case study, a total of 85 posts published on platform X were analysed, distributed across 30 different daily feeds of two prominent X profiles (60 daily feeds overall). Most of these feeds included content on male athletes. Specifically, 31 feeds (51.7%) included more than eight mentions of male athletes, and additional 13 feeds (21.7%) referred to between two and four times to male athletes. This means that nearly three-quarters (73.4%) of the daily feeds analysed focused predominantly on male athletes, reflecting a significant gender imbalance in the content shared by both X profiles.

In contrast, female athletes were absent from 27 out of the 60 feeds (45%). When present, their representation was generally minimal: 20 feeds (33.3%) included a single mention of a female athlete, and only 5 feeds (8.3%) had between five and eight mentions. Only two feeds contained more than eight mentions of female athletes.

These figures refer exclusively to the 60 daily feeds analysed from Italian institutional and media profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project. While they do not reflect the entirety of sports communication in Italy or on the platform, the data suggest that female athletes still remain more invisible than men in this segment of digital sports media. Even in a fast-paced and socially engaging environment like platform X, women's representation is marginal, reinforcing patterns of underrepresentation and gender imbalance.

IT3.4. Analysis of female athletes' X posts

Out of the full set of observations, all 85 posts identified included a mention of female athletes across the two Italian X profiles (i.e. *Il Post* and *Sky Sport*). These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Table 118 Characteristics of posts featuring female athletes in Italy

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	10	11.76%
	Individual sports	46	54.12%
	Mixed (team and individual sports)	29	34.12%

Competitive level of athletes*	Amateur	0	0%
	Grassroots	1	1.18%
	Professional	48	56.47%
	Olympic	44	51.76%
*the female athlete(s) referred to in one post could be both professional and Olympic level athletes			

Individual sports were much more prominent than team sports, appearing in 54.12% of the X posts. In terms of competitive level, most articles focused on Professional and/or Olympic athletes.

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of the specialised X profile, *Sky Sport*, and non-specialised X profile, *Il Post*. While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Italian sports media, they are aligned with patterns identified in previous research: a tendency to marginalise female athletes, especially outside of major events or disciplines perceived as traditionally feminine.

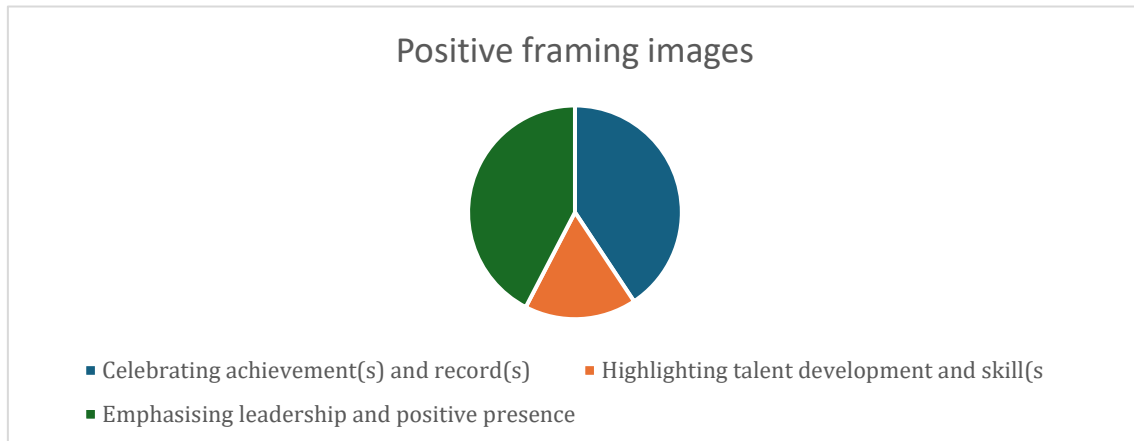
IT3.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in X posts

As previously mentioned, data collection in Italy identified 85 X posts that included references to female athletes. The textual analysis of these posts did not reveal any explicit examples of sexist language or derogatory expressions based on gender. Only three posts (3.53%) showed signs of trivialising female athletes' performance. These types of narratives reinforce outdated perceptions and deserve critical attention in the context of broader editorial practices.

It is worth highlighting that no cases of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes were identified in the content of these posts, which may indicate a positive development in sports discourse regarding the coverage of women. However, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution, as the sample is relatively small.

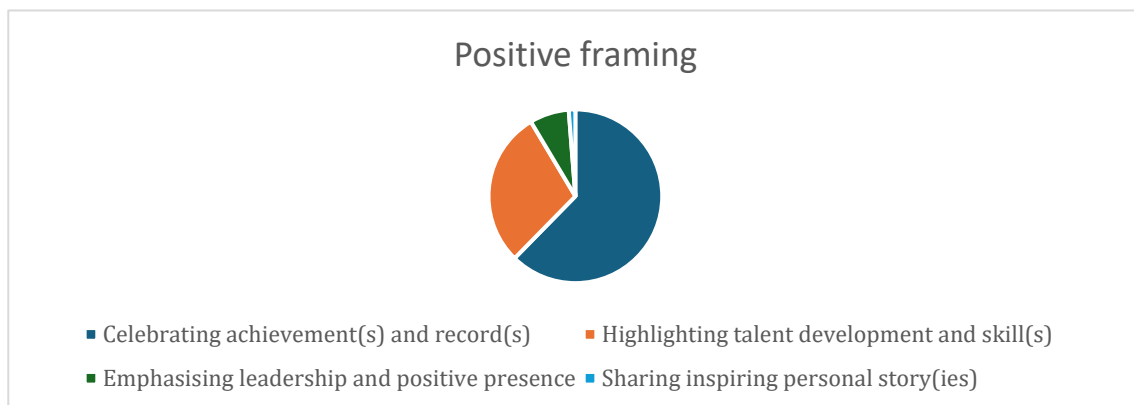
In contrast, 56 posts (65.88%) included positive portrayals of female athletes (see Figure 1). These were conveyed through the celebration of achievements and records, the appreciation of talent and skills, the emphasis on leadership, and the sharing of inspiring personal stories. Such representations point towards a tendency to value the role and accomplishments of women when they are made visible in sports media discourse.

Although these findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of the Italian sports media landscape, they provide an indicative picture of how female athletes are represented in the analysed X profiles. The low incidence of negative stereotypes or objectification, combined with the frequency of positive portrayals, may serve as an important indicator.



IT3.5. Presence and number of images in the X posts

Of the 85 X posts that mentioned female athletes, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 49 posts (57.65%) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete(s), while 30 posts (35.29%) did not feature any image. This pattern suggests that, although most posts included visual representation, a considerable proportion still did not use imagery, which may limit the visual impact and visibility of female athletes on social media. The presence of images is particularly relevant for strengthening the representation of women in sport, especially on platforms such as X, where visual content is central to reach and audience engagement. It is important to note that these findings refer to a limited sample of Italian



profiles analysed within the present study and should not be generalised to the entire digital sports media landscape.

IT3.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X post's images

Among the 49 X posts with images representing female athletes, very few cases of sexualisation, objectification, gender stereotypes or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visual representations. Only two posts (4.08%) presented negative framing, related to competition failure depicted in the image.

Figure 34 Positive framing images

On the other hand, 40 posts (81,63%) framed the athletes positively through images, reinforcing symbolic traits associated with merit, talent and leadership. Although the sample analysed is limited, the absence of sexist representations and the prevalence of affirmative visual narratives may indicate a more respectful and constructive approach in the digital coverage examined.

IT3.6. Synthesis of the findings for X posts

The analysis of Italian profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project, offers valuable insights into the digital representation of female athletes. The findings highlight a gender imbalance in sports coverage, with a relevant share of the profile daily feeds analysed (45%) containing a reduced number of posts with reference to female athletes. The concentration of content focused on male athletes, particularly within the specialised sports media outlet Sky Sport, reinforcing patterns already identified in traditional media: the marginalisation of women's sport and the dominance of male-focused narratives.

Despite this imbalance, the tone and content (both textual and visual) of the 85 analysed posts showed no explicit examples of sexist language or clear instances of objectification or sexualisation. Furthermore, the vast majority of these posts featured positive framing, highlighting leadership, achievement, talent, or inspiration. This suggests that, when included, female athletes tend to be portrayed with dignity and merit.

However, these findings should be interpreted considering the analysis's limitations. The sample is small (N = 85) and is based on only two institutional media profiles, which may not fully reflect the editorial strategies of these outlets or the broader complexities of gender representation in Italian sports media. Additionally, while it is possible to identify descriptive trends, the sample is not sufficiently robust to support generalisations or statistically valid hypothesis testing.

Finally, the data suggest that female athletes remain underrepresented in the Italian digital sports media landscape, even on platforms like X that offer opportunities for more immediate and inclusive content dissemination. Future research with larger samples, a broader range of profiles (e.g., athletes, federations), and longer timeframes will be essential to confirm these trends and promote a more equitable visibility of women in Italian sport.

IT4. Online TV episode analysis

This analysis refers to the Italian sample of online TV episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025, within the framework of the POWER project. The study examined the visibility and framing of female athletes in sports-related news segments broadcast by national TV channels.

IT4.1. Number of analysed episodes per TV channel

Table 119 presents the distribution of the 28 analysed episodes according to the TV channel of origin. The sample includes editions from two national news broadcasters: TGLa7 and TG2000. Both are generalist channels with regular sports coverage in their news bulletins.

Table 119 Distribution of the episodes per channel

TV Station	Number of Episodes	Percentage
TGLa7	13	46.43%
TG2000	15	53.57%

The sample is well balanced across both channels, allowing a comparative analysis. TG2000 accounts for just over half of the sample (53.57%), suggesting slightly more frequent inclusion of sport news in this channel's episodes.

IT4.2. Period of Data Collection

Table 120 presents the distribution of the 28 episodes by their month of broadcast. The analysis spans from June 2024 to February 2025, covering various seasons and news cycles.

Table 120 Distribution of the episodes by month

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	6	21.43%
July/24	2	7.14%
August/24	1	3.57%
September/24	6	21.43%
October/24	3	10.71%
November/24	4	14.29%
December/24	5	17.86%
January/25	1	3.57%
February/25	0	0%

The distribution is relatively well spread over the months. June and September 2024 had the highest concentration of coded episodes (21.43% each), while February 2025 had no available editions.

IT4.3. Distribution by weekday

Table 121 shows the distribution of episodes according to the weekday they were aired. This allows the identification of editorial routines or trends related to specific days.

Table 121 Distribution of the episodes by weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	5	17.86%
Tuesday	4	14.29%
Wednesday	5	17.86%
Thursday	3	10.71%
Friday	3	10.71%
Saturday	5	17.86%
Sunday	3	10.71%

There is an even distribution across weekdays, suggesting consistent coverage of sports news throughout the week, without a strong editorial focus on any day.

IT4.4. Analysis of female athletes' TV reports

Out of the entire sample, only 5 episodes included any mention of female athletes in Italy. These reports form the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in televised sports news.

Table 122 Characteristics of reports featuring female athletes

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the report sport-related?	Individual sport	5	100%
Type of sport featured	Tennis	4	80%
	Gymnastics/Fencing	1	20%
	Generic	1	20%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional /Olympic	5	100%

All reports were directly related to sport, primarily focusing on individual sports where athletes are used to compete also in teams (tournaments, club championships, etc.), especially tennis. All reports talked about Olympic and/or Professional athletes.

IT4.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes

None of the 5 reports trivialised the performance of female athletes, and there were no instances of gender stereotypes in the visuals. This may indicate a positive editorial evolution. Additionally, no report contained sexualised or objectifying imagery of female athletes.

On the other hand, 4 out of 5 reports framed the female athletes positively, mostly by celebrating achievements or highlighting performance. Only one report was aired without footages and images.

Among the positively framed reports:

- 60% combined celebration of achievements with recognition of talent;
- 40% focused exclusively on achievement or on recognition of talent.

No reports highlighted inspirational stories.

This shows a tendency to portray female athletes through a performance lens, without deeper exploration of their personal stories or leadership roles.

IT4.4.2 Gender presence and airtime in TV sports reporting

Out of the 28 analysed episodes:

- 17 episodes (60.71%) featured at least one report on male athletes;
- Only 5 episodes (17.86%) mentioned female athletes;

Across all episodes, the total estimated airtime for female athletes was less than 5 minutes.

This reflects a significant imbalance in both presence and editorial weight. While men were featured in the majority of episodes, women appeared in less than one out of every 5,6 and, even when included, their coverage was brief and isolated.

The cumulative 5 minutes dedicated to women's sport, across all months and broadcasters, emphasises how limited their visibility remains in the public sphere of televised news.

IT4.5. Synthesis of the findings of TV episodes

The analysis of Italian television episodes highlights **clear limitations in the visibility and framing of female athletes in televised sports journalism**. It is important to note that the number of coded episodes was relatively small ($n = 28$), of which only 5 included any reference to female athletes. This limited sample requires caution in the interpretation of the results and does not allow for generalisations regarding the broader Italian media landscape. Despite these constraints, the data point to a persistent gender imbalance, which is consistent with previous studies and existing empirical evidence. While male athletes were featured in 60.7% of the episodes analysed, women appeared in only 17.86%. In addition, the total estimated airtime dedicated to female athletes was less than 5 minutes. These findings suggest that the presence of women in televised sports news remains sporadic and marginal, and is clearly not part of a consistent editorial strategy.

On the other hand, when female athletes were included, their portrayal was generally positive. The reports focused on athletic performance, achievements, and talent, with no recorded instances of sexist language, sexualisation, trivialisation, or negative framing. This suggests an editorial tendency to avoid discriminatory discourse. However, such positive framing does not compensate for the structural problem of under-representation. Recognition without regular visibility continues to reinforce symbolic marginalisation. Moreover, the type of framing observed was relatively narrow, with no references to personal narratives, or broader social contributions.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that, although the tone of coverage may be evolving in a more positive direction, the frequency and depth of representation remain insufficient. Addressing gender imbalance in sports media therefore requires not only fairer framing practices, but above all a more frequent, diverse, and structured presence of female athletes in the daily media agenda.



IT5. Focus Group analysis

IT5.1. Details of the organised focus group

Date: April 2025

Place: On-line

Objective: Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media, discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media

No of participants: 12

Profile of participants: see the table below

Table 123 Focus Group Participants – Profile Summary

Code	Gender	Professional Affiliation	Role /	Relevant Background	Inclusion Category
P1	Female	TV Sport Journalist		10+ years TV sport journalist working for one of the mostly popular Italian sport pay-TV outlets	Journalist
P2	Female	Paper/online journalist	sport	20+ years in journalism; élite sport journalist of the mostly read Italian generic newspaper	Journalist
P3	Male	Communication Team Member at Lazio Regional Council		Covered multiple sports, experience in institutional communication	Media professional
P4	Male	Freelance senior communication advisor		20+ years experience in media relations, crisis communication, business communication and marketing	Media professional
P5	Male	Communication Team Member at Lazio Regional Council		Experience in institutional communication and social media management	Content creator

P6	Female	Grassroots soccer-player		Female athlete
P7	Female	Olympian, professional athlete	Graduated from Psychology Faculty, experience in gender equality in sport and	Female athlete
P8	Male	TV sport journalist and live commentator	30+ years TV sport journalist working for one of the mostly popular Italian sport pay-TV outlets	Journalist
P9	Male	Paper/online sport journalist	20+ years in journalism; elite sport journalist of the mostly read Italian sport newspaper	Journalist
P10	Female	Paper/online sport journalist	10+ years in journalism; elite sport journalist of one of the mostly read Italian generic newspaper	Journalist
P11	Female	Former professional volleyball player		Female athlete
P12	Male	Retired newspaper journalist	40+ experience in journalism	Journalist

IT5.1. Responses Analysis

The compared analysis of the answers given by the professionals involved in the focus group is broken down below. For each category, common traits and disparities among the answers are provided.

Category 1: Inequality in Media Coverage

Common traits among the answers

➤ **Recognition of gender inequality.**

Almost 100% of participants agree there is some degree of inequality in media coverage between male and female athletes. Women's sports generally receive less consistent and lower-quality coverage compared to men's sports, particularly in traditionally male-dominated sports like soccer.

- **Sports with more Coverage vs. less coverage.**
 - **More coverage:** individual sports such as athletics, volleyball, skiing, swimming, gymnastics, and rhythmic gymnastics tend to receive relatively better coverage. Success in these sports often results in heightened visibility.
 - **Less coverage:** Team sports, especially women's soccer and basketball, are repeatedly described as marginalized and struggling for consistent media attention despite occasional successes.
- **Fluctuation based on success.**

Media attention to women's sports tends to be event-driven or success-dependent. Female athletes or teams gain visibility primarily after exceptional achievements, but this recognition is often fleeting.
- **Societal and cultural factors.**

Common across answers is the influence of societal norms and stereotypes — femininity, perceptions of aggressiveness in certain sports, and gender roles heavily shape the way women's sports are covered.
- **Leadership and representation in the media.**

Several responses emphasize the lack of women in decision-making roles within sports journalism and editorial leadership, impacting the fairness and tone of media coverage.
- **Economic aspects and media market dynamics.**

There is broad agreement that economic factors—such as sponsorship, viewership ratings, and commercial potential—play a major role in shaping media coverage disparities. Women's sports often have less capital investment, which feeds into less media attention.
- **Signs of progress and change.**

Some answers note improvements, especially recently (e.g., at the Olympics or in women's volleyball and skiing), while acknowledging that parity is still a work in progress.

Disparities among the answers

- **Severity and root causes of inequality**
 - Some answers (e.g., P2, P4) stress deep-rooted cultural and chauvinistic causes and gender bias as the main reasons for inequality.
 - Others (e.g., P12) attribute disparities more to economic factors and market demand than to overt discrimination or sexism.
- **Evaluation of the Italian context**
 - Some responses consider Italy relatively less unequal in individual sports, partially due to successful female athletes generating attention (from P8).
 - Others highlight specific struggles in Italy around women's soccer and media leadership (P2, P5, P3).
- **Role of media narratives**
 - P6 and P11 emphasize problematic narratives where female athletes' personal lives or stereotypical portrayals overshadow achievements.
 - Others focus more on structural media biases without as much focus on narrative content (P1, P5).

- **Outlook on progress**
 - P9 and parts of P8 and P12 express cautious optimism about shifting attitudes and gradually closing the media coverage gap.
 - Conversely, P2 and P7 underscore that core issues, particularly in team sports, remain persistent and hard to overcome.
- **Examples of positive models**
 - P3 highlights the American collegiate system as a positive example fostering women's soccer growth, contrasting with Italy's lagging institutional support. This structural perspective on development pathways is less discussed elsewhere.

Category 2: Stereotypes and Sexualisation

Common traits among the answers

- **Recognition of inequality in coverage**

Participants uniformly acknowledge inequality in media coverage between male and female athletes. Female athletes often receive less overall attention and more stereotyped or superficial coverage focused on appearance, femininity, or emotions rather than athletic performance.
- **Influence of societal and cultural expectations**

There is a shared perception that public and media expectations, particularly in Italy, impose traditional feminine ideals (beauty, delicacy), which affect how female athletes are portrayed and accepted. This also pressures women to conform by blending traditionally masculine physicality with feminine appearance cues (e.g., makeup).
- **Focus on appearance and sexualization**

Several participants highlight the historical and sometimes ongoing emphasis in media on female athletes' physical appearance or sexualization (e.g., in beach volleyball), rather than their sporting skills or achievements. This reflects commercial marketing strategies or cultural stereotypes.
- **Sport-specific coverage differences**

While not always explicitly, participants imply that sports with more traditional or "feminine" associations (e.g., gymnastics, volleyball) tend to receive somewhat better or more respectful coverage, whereas physically intense, contact, or traditionally "masculine" sports (like women's boxing or soccer) struggle with marginalization, negative stereotypes, or inconsistent visibility.
- **Importance of education and changing narratives.**

Many responses emphasize the need to educate the public, media professionals, and event organizers to shift focus from superficial or stereotyped portrayals to celebrating athletic excellence and everyday stories of female athletes. Responsible journalism and collaboration with athletes are proposed as critical steps.
- **Systemic and broader societal challenges.**

It is widely recognized that the problem is part of a larger systemic issue involving gender norms, economic interests, and societal chauvinism. Media's role in perpetuating or

challenging these patterns is viewed as pivotal, but cultural and structural changes beyond sports media are also necessary.

Disparities among the answers

- **Degree of problem emphasis.**
Some answers (P2, P5, P4) stress deep-rooted cultural, patriarchal, and systemic sexism as primary drivers of inequality. Others (P12) downplay the role of overt sexual discrimination somewhat, arguing that serious fans prioritize sporting performance and that acceptance is growing (e.g., female referees gaining respect).
- **View on market and commercial influence.**
P3 highlights sexualization as a deliberate marketing strategy used to attract sponsors and audiences, suggesting some complicity or necessity in current practices, while others emphasize the need to dismantle such stereotypes regardless of economic considerations.
- **Assessment of public acceptance and athlete behavior.**
P12 provides a somewhat optimistic perspective that female athletes are increasingly judged on merit rather than gender, contrasting with cases like the Algerian boxer who faced backlash. P9 focuses on athlete professionalism and public education about behaviors and presentation, implying that athlete conduct also shapes media and public reception.
- **Media's role: reporter neutrality vs. narrative shaping.**
P1 advocates for journalists to report independently of public expectations, focusing on factual merit, while P10 and others argue media actively shape and must correct biased public perceptions through thoughtful representation.
- **Focus on different types of coverage and sports.**
While explicit sports comparisons are limited, the answers indicate that female athletes in high-profile or traditionally feminine sports (like volleyball, gymnastics) fare better in coverage than those in contact or less traditionally accepted sports (boxing, soccer). Women's soccer was specifically noted in other contexts as marginalized, but here the focus is more on general media patterns and stereotypes across various sports.

Category 3: Lack of Focus on Performance

The group identified a recurring issue where women athletes are interviewed or portrayed based on their personal lives, appearance, or emotional experiences, rather than their training, achievements, or competition strategies.

Category 4: Impact on Athletes' Careers

Common traits among answers

- **Combatting gender stereotypes.**
All answers emphasize that increasing the visibility of women's sporting achievements plays a crucial role in challenging and reducing traditional gender stereotypes associated with sports. By showcasing female role models and their accomplishments, media and

educational initiatives can reshape cultural perceptions and inspire young people, especially girls, to pursue sports more confidently.

➤ **Inspiration for youth, especially girls.**

The answers agree that seeing successful female athletes inspires future generations to engage in sports, providing tangible role models who demonstrate what women can achieve athletically. This inspiration is not only about becoming champions but also about personal growth and empowerment through sports activities.

➤ **Importance of storytelling and media representation.**

The power of narrative—sharing athletes’ personal and sporting stories—is repeatedly highlighted as a tool to connect emotionally with young audiences and foster inspiration. Media coverage that goes beyond scores to emphasize these stories makes female athletes more relatable and accessible.

➤ **Education and cultural change.**

Education is seen as essential, both through formal programs (like school projects and awareness campaigns) and in the media’s role as educator to the public. Changing cultural attitudes toward women in sports requires sustained educational efforts alongside visibility.

➤ **Positive feedback loop.**

There is a shared understanding that increased visibility leads to greater participation, which improves skill levels and results, which then generate more media interest—creating a virtuous cycle benefiting women’s sports overall. This cycle can encourage parents to support their daughters’ involvement in sports.

➤ **Addressing historical disparities.**

The historical lag in recognition and support for women’s sports, compared to men’s, is acknowledged. Increasing visibility is part of addressing this delayed opportunity to inspire young athletes and to close technical and societal gaps.

Disparities among the answers

➤ **Scope and mechanism of change.**

One answer stresses broader media literacy and language use (P2), emphasizing the role of journalism quality and the cultural power of accurate representation. Another answer (P7) adds the role of digital and social media in shaping sponsorships and visibility, noting both progress and ongoing challenges in what qualities generate attention.

➤ **Focus on formalized vs. informal inspiration.**

P7 places notable emphasis on the emotional and universal language of sports, suggesting inspiration comes also from shared struggles and stories beyond formal programs. The others focus more on structured initiatives such as school projects and campaigns as principal means to foster inspiration.

➤ **Role of sponsorship and commercial interest.**

P7 uniquely highlights the influence of sponsorship dynamics, noting how athletes with strong social media presence or appealing aesthetics historically received more support. This points to complexities between visibility for mere achievement and visibility tied to marketability.

➤ **Examples and milestones:**

P2 specifically identifies the 2019 Women's World Cup and related phenomena (Barbie Sara Gama, Panini stickers) as concrete cultural milestones that provided role models and inspired aspirations, whereas other answers remain more general in describing visibility's impact.

Category 5: Sexist and Gendered Stereotypes

Common traits among the answers

➤ **Recognition of Progress but acknowledgment of persistent issues.**

- Most answers agree that there has been meaningful progress in reducing gender stereotypes in sports media. For example, P9 highlights milestones like Kirsty Coventry's IOC leadership and the decline of overtly inappropriate language. Similarly, P8 and P4 acknowledge advancements in athlete recognition and media sensitivity.
- However, all stress that despite improvements, significant challenges remain, such as subtle stereotyping, biased language, and unbalanced coverage

➤ **Language and representation as central issues.**

- Almost every answer highlights the crucial role of language in shaping media portrayals of female athletes. Issues include objectifying language (like calling women by first names instead of last), stereotyped adjectives, and dismissive or sexist headlines
- P1, P9, P2, P4 and others emphasize the need for respectful, precise, and non-gendered language. This includes avoiding clichés (e.g. "she plays like a man") and biased imagery especially in audiovisual media.

➤ **Importance of training and education.**

- A strong consensus exists on the need for better education and training for current and future sports journalists. Training should cover gender sensitivity, respectful language, knowledge of athletes' backgrounds, and technical skills.
- Both initial journalistic education and continuing professional development are recommended (P4). P2 also stresses practical experience combined with linguistic attention.

➤ **Cultural and societal roots of stereotyping.**

- Multiple answers (media landscape analysis, P11, P2) identify gender stereotypes as deeply cultural and systemic, rooted in patriarchal societies and broader social norms. Media change is seen as necessary but insufficient alone; it must be part of wider cultural transformation starting from school and family education.

➤ **Need to highlight athletic merit over gender or appearance.**

- P12, P8 and others urge focusing on the athletic achievements and professional merits of athletes rather than their gender, appearance, or personal lives. This involves shifting media narratives to center skill and performance, reducing sex-based discrimination.

➤ **Diverse and inclusive coverage.**



- Several answers point out the dominance of male sports, especially soccer, limiting visibility and editorial resources for women's and minor sports (P3, P12). Expanding coverage to these areas is seen as an important step for equity.
- **Role of media professionals as change agents.**
 - Answers agree that journalists, editors, and media organizations should take an active role in challenging stereotypes, advocating for fairer treatment, and ensuring balanced representations. This includes internal advocacy within editorial offices (P12) and professional responsibility for accuracy and fairness (P10).
- **Value of empathy and personal values in journalism.**
 - P7 brings in the dimension of personal values like empathy, respect, and education as foundational to respectful sports reporting. Journalism is not just about technical skill but also about ethical considerations and personal responsibility.

Disparities among the answers

- **Degree of optimism about current progress**
 - Some responses are more optimistic, highlighting concrete progress such as less tolerated sexist language and increased recognition of female athletes (P9, P8).
 - Others (media landscape analysis, P11) remain cautious or skeptical, underscoring that sexism and stereotypes remain widespread and entrenched, requiring systemic and vigorous ongoing action.
- **Focus of needed improvements**
 - Language and terminology are widely emphasized; however, some answers highlight other needs more strongly:
 - P3 emphasizes structural media issues like editorial priorities favoring men's soccer.
 - others focus on audiovisual reporting nuances like avoiding suggestive imagery and gender-biased questions.
 - P2 stresses practical journalistic skills applied under commercial pressures.
 - P7 anchors the solution in broader social values and the role of families and schools in building empathy.
- **View on the role of journalistic objectivity vs. advocacy**
 - P1 advocates for journalistic independence and balanced reporting, cautioning against reacting excessively to feminist critiques, aiming for a nuanced approach to gender bias.
 - P10, P12, and others embrace more proactive roles for journalists in shaping public perceptions and actively combating stereotypes.
- **Approach to gender-specific language and treatment**
 - P1 notes subtle language biases like the first-name/last-name convention, while P4 and others emphasize removing gendered stereotypes from descriptions

altogether. P12 suggests prioritizing sporting excellence over gender-focus in language, to normalize women's sports rather than treat them as "other."

➤ **Scope of media and forms of coverage addressed**

- Most answers discuss print and online journalism generally, but only one uniquely emphasizes audiovisual media's specific challenges like live commentary and production constraints.
- P3 uniquely comments on the difficulties minor sports face within the dominant media landscape focused on mainstream sports.

➤ **Examples and milestones cited**

- Some answers bring concrete examples (P9: Kirsty Coventry; P8: Allyson Felix, Megan Rapinoe, Paola Egonu; P1: Jannik Sinner's girlfriend media coverage), while others take a more general or theoretical tone without naming specifics.

Category 6: Need for Change in Representation

P4 highlights the role of private companies in promoting education and awareness beyond traditional media. Sponsors can significantly impact societal attitudes by launching positive campaigns. As an example, MP2 mentions a recent initiative by Lines featuring Miriam Silla and Alessia Orro, which openly discusses the menstrual cycle in women's sports—a topic still considered taboo. This approach offers a powerful opportunity to use athlete testimonials to raise public awareness about sensitive issues that have historically received little media attention.

Final synthesis of the findings – Italy

The cross-format analysis conducted in Italy reveals a **persistent under-representation of female athletes in sports media**. It is important to highlight that data collection refer to the Olympic period, which would typically be expected to increase media coverage of women's sport. However, the findings suggest otherwise. **Across newspapers, online magazines, social media platforms, and television news, women's presence was limited compared to men's and largely confined to high-performance contexts**. The dominant presence of male sports in the national news agenda appears to exacerbate this disparity, often overshadowing other disciplines and further marginalising female athletes.

In the print media sample, 70% of the analysed editions (30 out of 43) included at least one mention of female athletes, while 39 out of 43 editions comprised between two and over eight mentions of male athletes. **Although the tone of female athletes' coverage was generally positive and free from sexist language, the representation was narrow, focusing almost exclusively on achievements and talent, with few references to leadership or personal narratives**. Visual framing followed a similar pattern, with most images presented in small formats and limited prominence (only 50% of the analysed articles comprised at least one image of female athletes).

In the case of online sports magazines, 10 out of 18 analysed editions featured a reference to female athletes. **However, the sample was very small and derived from a single online sport magazine, which can not be considered as wholly representative of the entire digital sport media sector**. Once again, where present, the representation was positive but lacked thematic depth. Coverage concentrated primarily on individual sports at Olympic and/or professional level, with limited engagement in broader storytelling or sustained visibility.

The analysis of social media focused on posts from the institutional X (formerly Twitter) accounts of *Sky Sport* and *Il Post*. Out of the 60 daily feeds analysed, 33 mentioned female athletes **but the majority of them only contained one single mention of female athlete**. Contents mostly concentrated on performance or achievements and did not comprise sexualisation and stereotypical language, however the disparity with male presence is still much notable, since 44 feeds out of 60 included from two to more than eight mentions of male athletes.

Television coverage presented the most striking example of marginalisation. Out of the 28 analysed episodes 17 featured at least one report on male athletes and only 5 episodes mentioned female athletes.

Finally, the **focus group discussions reinforced the patterns observed across formats**. Women's sports generally receive less consistent and lower-quality coverage compared to men's sports, despite the fact that Italy sports media are considered relatively less unequal in individual sports, partially due to successful female athletes generating attention. Participants identified structural barriers such as cultural stereotypes, gender norms, economic interests, and societal

chauvinism and stressed the importance of keep educating the audience, media professionals and event organizers

It is essential to acknowledge that some of the samples were small, which limits the possibility of drawing general conclusions. Nevertheless, the consistency of the findings across different formats, platforms, and content types points to a structural issue in the Italian media landscape. Recognition without regular visibility continues to reinforce symbolic marginalisation. Addressing gender imbalance in sports media therefore requires not only the elimination of stereotypes, but above all the integration of female athletes into the daily news agenda in a sustained and strategic manner.



“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Portugal



Co-funded by
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Introduction

In Portugal, the sporting landscape remains deeply gender-imbalanced, both in terms of participation and representation. Despite gradual improvements in female engagement across multiple levels, leadership positions in sports remain overwhelmingly male-dominated. Currently, there is only one female president among the national sport federations, and women account for just 16% of vice presidents and 14% of board members. In the coaching domain, women make up merely 10% of registered coaches and occupy just 15% of elite-level coaching roles. Although roughly one-third of sports club members are women, this participation is not reflected in media visibility or institutional leadership.

Media representation remains particularly skewed. Studies analysing coverage of women's sport in Portuguese newspapers between 1996 and 2016 (Coelho, 2017) showed minimal change in the quantity or quality of coverage. Female athletes continue to receive very limited attention, often framed in ways that emphasise aesthetics over athletic performance. Women account for just 2% of all sports news and only 1% of accompanying images. Interestingly, within this marginal space, women's football accounts for over a third of the content. These figures highlight a persistent structural invisibility of women in Portuguese sports media and underscore the ongoing need to challenge and reshape narratives around gender in sport.

PT1. Newspaper Analysis – Print Media

This initial analysis refers to the newspapers under review. A sample of 62 newspaper editions published in Portugal between May 2024 and February 2025 was analysed, with data collection taking place between February and April 2025.

PT1.1. Number of newspaper editions analysed

The Table 124 presents the distribution of the 62 newspaper editions analysed in the Portuguese case study. Editions from three widely circulated national publications were included: A Bola, Jornal de Notícias, and Público. While A Bola is a sports-specialised newspaper, the others are general news outlets.

Table 124 Distribution of the newspaper editions

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of the newspaper editions	Percentage
A Bola	Yes	22	35.5%
Jornal de Notícias	No	21	33.9%
Público	No	19	30.6%
Total		62	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of editions, enabling a comparative analysis between editorial profiles. *A Bola*, being sports-focused, accounts for the highest share (35.5%), potentially indicating a greater inclination toward sports content. The significant inclusion of generalist newspapers is crucial to understanding how sport — particularly women’s sport — is portrayed in non-specialised media.

PT1.2. Period of the data collection

Table 125 presents the distribution of the 62 newspaper editions analysed by their month of publication. Data were collected from May 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 125 Distribution of the newspaper editions per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
May/24	6	9.7%
June/24	9	14.5%
July/24	4	6.5%
August/24	6	9.7%
September/24	7	11.3%
October/24	6	9.7%
November/24	6	9.7%
January/25	6	9.7%
February/25	6	9.7%
Total	62	100%

The editions are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in June 2024 (14.5%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to major events or pre-Olympic preparations. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 126 shows the distribution of the newspaper’s editions according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 126 Distribution of the editions per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	9.7%
Tuesday	4	7.4%
Wednesday	13	21.0%
Thursday	9	14.5%
Friday	6	9.7%
Saturday	9	14.5%
Sunday	9	14.5%
Total	62	100%

There is a noticeable concentration of newspaper editions on Wednesdays (21%), which may reflect editorial routines associated with midweek sports coverage. The substantial presence of editions on Saturdays and Sundays (14.5% each) also suggests a consistent distribution of sports news across the entire week, rather than a concentration on weekends alone.

PT1.3. Number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes

This comparison presents the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per newspaper edition. The data are grouped into ranges based on the observed volume of coverage. It is worth noting that seven editions included no reference to male athletes, which stands out as an exception within the overall trend.

Table 127 indicates whether each of the 62 analysed editions included any mention of female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of editions with no mention is highlighted to help assess the extent of female invisibility in the sports media landscape.

Table 127 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	27.4%
No	38	61.3%
Editions with no sports mentioning	7	11.3%
Total	62	100%

Only 27.4% of editions included any articles on female athletes, while the majority (61.3%) did not reference them at all. This indicates a significant gender disparity in sports journalism. The seven uncoded editions (11.3%) also deserve attention, as they may reflect either omission or difficulty in identifying explicit female presence in the content.

Table 128 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	-	38
One	3	11
Between 2 and 4	18	6
Between 5 and 8	7	-
More than 8	27	-
Editions with no sports mentioning	7	7
Total (valid responses)	55	

Almost half of the editions (49.1%) included more than eight articles focusing on male athletes, clearly demonstrating the dominant presence of men's sport in newspaper coverage. When combined with editions featuring five to eight articles, the total rises to 61.8%, reinforcing the

gender imbalance in media focus. The seven editions without any reference to male athletes are outliers and merit separate consideration.

In nearly 70% of the editions, no article was published exclusively about female athletes. Even when women were represented, the coverage was usually limited to just one article per edition. Only six editions went beyond this, publishing between two and four articles.

An analysis of the number of articles mentioning female athletes, based on the 55 editions with specified data, reveals a striking imbalance. In 38 editions (69.1%), there was no mention of female athletes whatsoever, while 11 editions (20.0%) included only a single reference. A further 5 editions (9.1%) featured two mentions, and just 1 edition (1.8%) included three. In most cases, women are either entirely absent or only marginally present in sports coverage. Editions with two or more mentions remain extremely rare, pointing to a fragmented and inconsistent visibility. This pattern reinforces the broader diagnosis of the marginalisation of women in Portuguese sports journalism. These results suggest sporadic and shallow representation of women in Portuguese sports coverage.

PT1.3.1. Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes in Portugal

A t-test was conducted on a sample of 55 newspaper editions analysed in Portugal, collected between May 2024 and February 2025, with the aim of comparing the average number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes during this period. All editions included at least one article featuring male and/or female athletes. The results show that, on average, the editions contained 3.05 articles (SD = 1.03) about male athletes and only 0.42 articles (SD = 0.69) about female athletes. Both values are statistically greater than zero, with highly significant results ($t(54) = 22.081$ for men; $t(54) = 4.524$ for women; $p < .001$ in both cases). The effect size measured by Cohen's d was 2.98 for male athletes (very large) and 0.69 for female athletes (moderate).

Table 129 Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes

Gender	Mean articles per edition	SD	t value	p (two-tailed)	Cohen's d
Male	3.05	1.03	22.081	< .001	2.98
Female	0.42	0.69	4.524	< .001	0.69

The data collected in Portugal reveal a substantial difference in the average number of articles per edition between male and female athletes. The average number of articles about men is more than seven times higher than that of women, highlighting a clear and persistent asymmetry in media coverage. The very large effect size for male athletes confirms intense and consistent visibility, whereas the female presence, though statistically significant, remains marginal. These findings reinforce the notion that sports journalism continues to overwhelmingly favour the male gender, relegating women to peripheral positions on the news agenda.

PT1.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the entire sample, only 24 articles (i.e., minimum one per edition) were identified in Portugal that included any mention of female athletes. These articles constitute the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in sports journalism. The following section examines various aspects of these 24 articles.

Table 130 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Portugal (n = 24)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the article sport-related?	Yes	22	91.7%
	No	2	8.3%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	10	41.7%
	Individual sports	14	58.3%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	11	45.8%
	Olympic	11	45.8%
	Grassroots	2	8.3%

Most articles featuring female athletes (91.7%) are directly related to sport, indicating that women's presence in the media is usually linked to their sporting roles. However, the 8.3% of non-sport-related articles raise concerns: in these cases, athletes are often featured in contexts such as lifestyle or social topics, where their athletic achievements may be secondary. This highlights the importance of critically examining how female athletes are framed editorially.

Among the articles featuring female athletes, there is a slight predominance of individual sports (58.3%) compared to team sports (41.7%). This may suggest a tendency within the media to highlight individual performances — particularly in Olympic or solo disciplines. However, the relative balance indicates that women's sport, when covered, is not limited to one competitive format.

There is an even split between athletes at the professional and Olympic levels, each making up 45.8% of the coverage. This suggests that visibility for women in sport is largely confined to high-performance contexts. Grassroots-level athletes are significantly underrepresented, appearing in only two cases — a finding that limits public recognition of the diverse spaces in which women engage in sport.

PT1.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As already mentioned, data collection in Portugal identified 24 female athletes' articles. Analysis of these texts revealed no instances of sexist language, or the use of derogatory expressions based on gender. This suggests that, in the cases where women are included, journalistic discourse tends to avoid discriminatory terminology. Only 1 article (4.2%) among those analysed trivialised the performance of a female athlete, specifically through the framing of "downplaying achievements". Although statistically isolated, this case illustrates how symbolic devaluation

practices can still occur, even within content that ostensibly aims to highlight female figures in sport.

Regarding gender stereotypes, none of the 24 articles contained such content. The same is true for sexualisation or objectification in the text, which were also entirely absent. While this may indicate a positive evolution in journalistic discourse, it is important to note that the sample already derives from a small subset of articles that effectively include women – which may skew the data towards a more positive representation than what is seen across the broader media landscape.

PT1.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

Among the 24 articles analysed, only 1 (4.2%) included negative framing of the female athlete, focusing the narrative on disciplinary issues – a case that raises concerns about the reinforcement of stigma, even if isolated. Conversely, 21 articles (87.5%) presented positive framing of female athletes. The qualitative categorisation of positive framing revealed the following main patterns. For example, 30% of the positively framed cases (6 articles), the text combined the celebration of achievements, recognition of talent, and leadership attributes. A further 20% highlighted celebration and talent, while 15% focused solely on celebrating achievements. Leadership alone appeared in 10% of cases, as did combinations involving inspiring personal stories and leadership, or exclusive emphasis on talent.

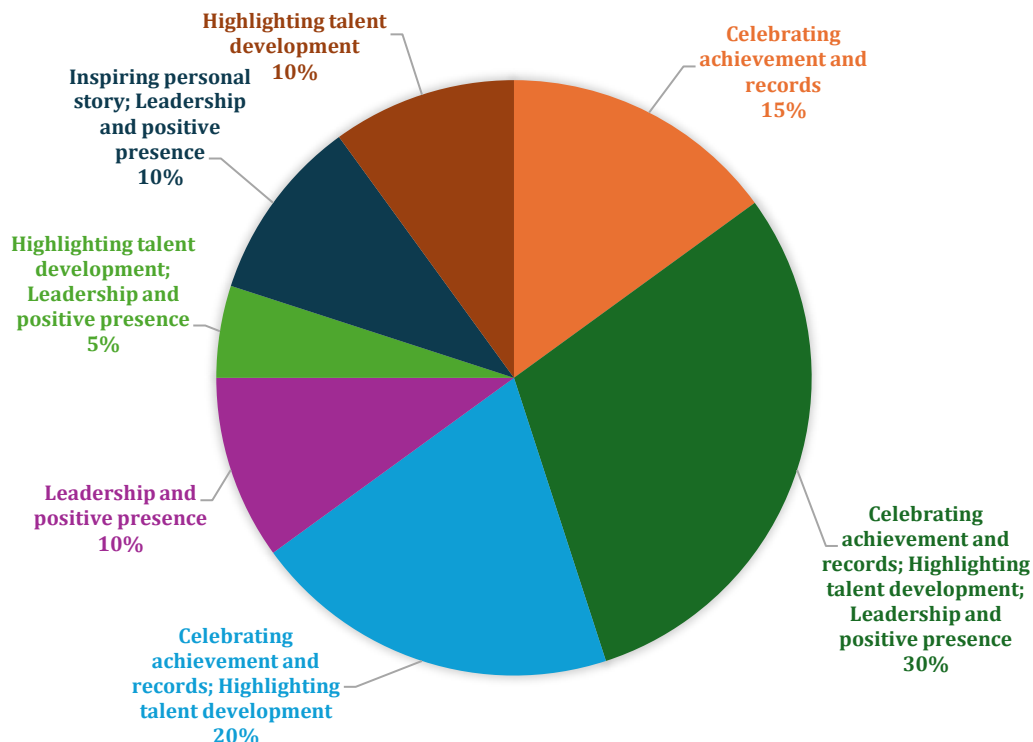


Figure 35 Categorisation of positive framing text

These data indicate that the recognition of performance and the attribution of positive traits such as talent, leadership, and inspiration are the most common forms of positive textual framing found in the articles from Portugal.

PT1.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

Among the 24 articles that featured female athletes, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 100% of the articles (24) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete, 75% of cases (18 articles), there was only one image, in 25% of cases (6 articles), two or more images were included. Among articles with multiple images, three had more than two, and three had more than three, indicating that some reports used more extensive visual sequences.

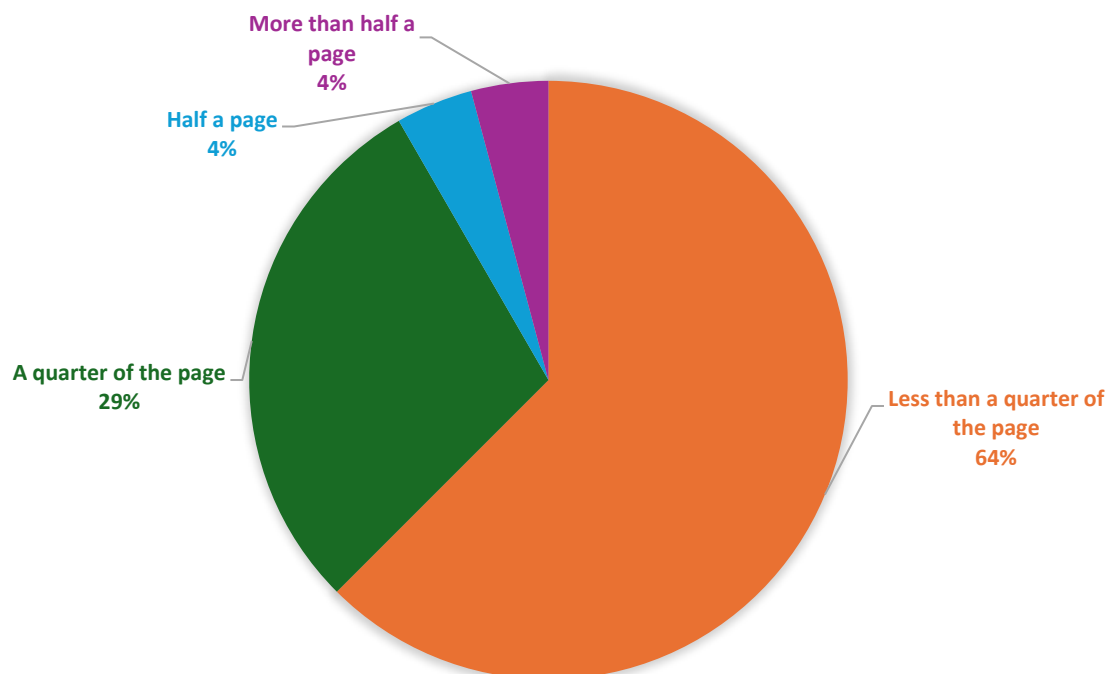


Figure 36 Size of the image

Regarding the size of the images, there was a clear predominance of smaller visual formats (see Figure 36). These findings suggest that, even when female athletes are visually represented, the images tend to occupy modest editorial space, potentially limiting their impact.

PT1.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the image

Among the 24 articles containing images of female athletes, no cases of sexualisation, objectification, gender stereotypes, or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visuals. Only 1 article (4.2%) presented negative framing, linked to visual references to sanctions or disciplinary issues. On the other hand, 19 articles (79.2%) visually framed female athletes in a positive light.

PT1.5.2. Negative and positive framing in the images

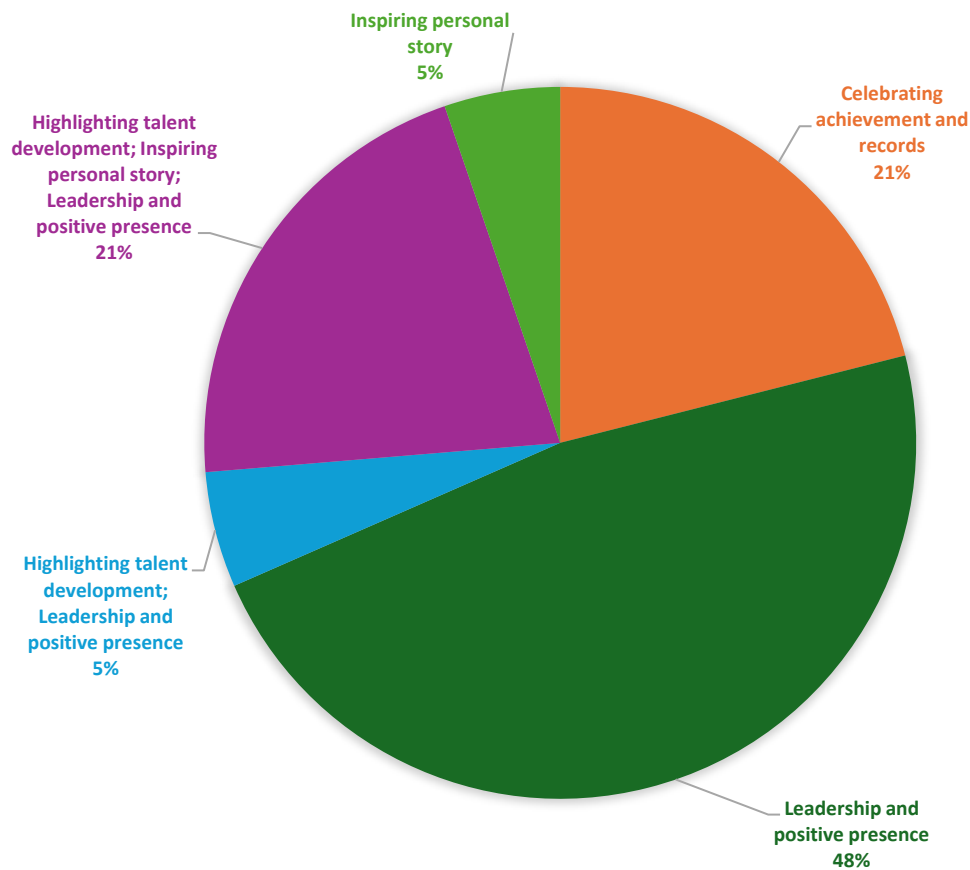


Figure 37 Categorisation of positive framing images

Leadership and positive presence were the most frequent framing, present in nearly half of the cases (47.4%). The combinations involving talent, inspiring personal stories, and leadership were found in 21.1% of cases. Representations focusing on the celebration of achievements also accounted for 21.1%. Other framings included combinations of talent and leadership (5.3%) or solely inspiring personal stories (5.3%). Visual framing tends to reinforce symbolic attributes associated with leadership, inspiration, and strong performance, maintaining consistency with the patterns identified in the textual content.

With the aim of deepening the qualitative analysis of the positive media representations of female athletes, a bipartite network visualisation was created using Gephi software (version 0.10.1). The network was constructed by cross-referencing the headlines of news articles with the previously coded categories of positive framing, such as “celebration of achievements”, “development of talent”, or “leadership and positive presence”.

For this purpose, the network nodes were organised into two distinct types: article headlines and thematic categories, allowing a visual representation of the relationship between the published content and the symbolic framings attributed to the athletes. The connections (edges) indicate the presence of a specific category within a given headline.

The data were organised into two spreadsheets, one listing the nodes and the other the connections, and were imported into Gephi Software (V. 0.10). Following importation, the ForceAtlas 2 layout algorithm was applied, as it is particularly suitable for networks that exhibit a modular or community-based structure.

The colour and size of the nodes were also adjusted to facilitate visual distinction between the two node types and to highlight their relative importance within the network, with blue used to represent the categories and pink for the headlines. This methodological step enabled a visual identification of patterns of co-occurrence, density of connections, and semantic centrality within the journalistic discourse, clearly revealing the main forms of symbolic appreciation attributed to female athletes in the analysed headlines.

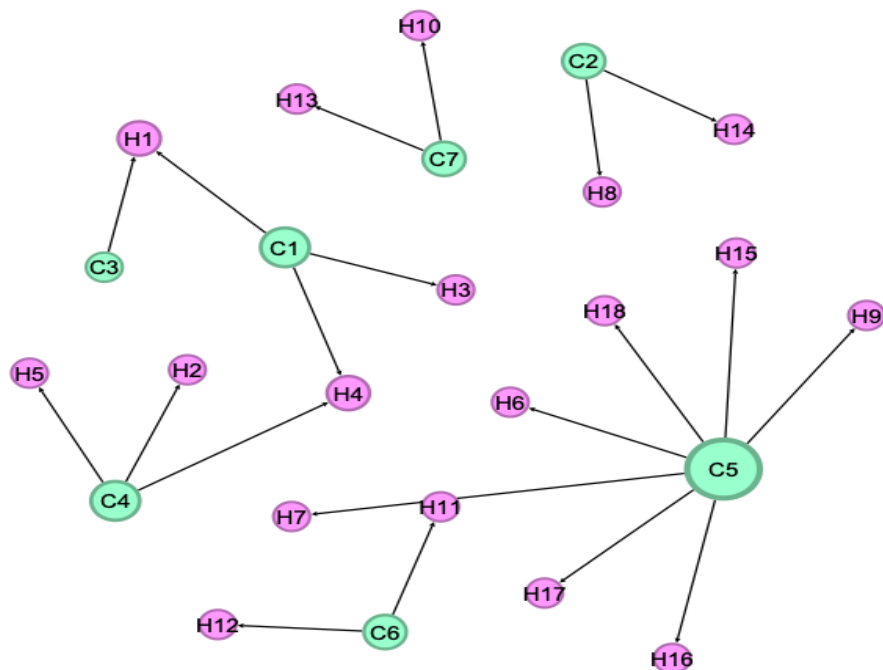


Figure 38 Network between headlines and positive categories

Table 131 Code, Categories and Headlines

Code	Category and Headlines
C1	Leadership and positive presence
C2	Highlighting talent development; Leadership and positive presence
C3	Inspiring personal story; Leadership and positive presence
C4	Highlighting talent development
C5	Celebrating achievement and records

C6	Celebrating achievement and records; Highlighting talent development; Leadership and positive presence
C7	Celebrating achievement and records; Highlighting talent development
H1	Every step we take is historic
H2	Excellent result for Daniela Campos on a unique day
H3	A crowd welcomed Patrícia Sampaio
H4	Academy players can also make it here if they work for it
H5	Fernando Pimenta in search of an unprecedented feat
H6	Lionesses with very sharp claws
H7	Patrícia 'Gyokeres' Sampaio
H8	Pauels threatens Rute Costa
H9	Porto delivers titles in the marathon
H10	SAILORS SECURE EURO 2025 PLAY-OFF
H11	Searching for records at the World Championships
H12	Telma Monteiro announces the end of a 24-year career
H13	Telma Monteiro, farewell to a judo legend
H14	Ten 'Benfica-style' minutes were enough to settle it
H15	Timo and Kvantidze secure podiums
H16	Vitória breaks national record
H17	Warriors remain unbeaten

The network analysis revealed several key elements:

Thematic centrality: The category “Celebrating achievement and records” stands out as the most connected node, appearing in multiple headlines. This result reinforces the dominance of a success and merit-based narrative as the primary form of media recognition for female athletes.

Other relevant categories: The categories “Highlighting talent development” and “Leadership and positive presence” also show high connectivity, forming thematic clusters around the symbolic appreciation of athletes as models of excellence and inspiration.

Headlines with multiple connections: Some headlines are linked to more than one category, which demonstrates the complexity of positive framing. A notable example is the headline about Telma Monteiro, which is simultaneously associated with all three main categories, suggesting broad recognition of her career.

Semantic isolation and specificity: Some headlines, although positive, are connected to only one category. This may indicate more targeted and specific representations. These cases convey focused messages, such as the emphasis on a team’s unbeaten run or the breaking of a national record.

Visual distribution and clustering: The network formed visually distinct subsets, grouping headlines by thematic category. This clustering reinforces the idea that certain types of positive framing tend to appear systematically and consistently within the media discourse.

PT1.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the framing of female athletes, we analysed the 24 articles from the Portuguese sample of the POWER project that included visual representations of women in sport. Two key variables were considered:

- *Image size:* coded as an ordinal categorical variable with four categories (i.e., less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half a page). For analytical purposes, this variable was subsequently grouped into two levels: a) small images (no image or less than ¼ of the page); b) medium/large images (equal to or greater than ¼ of the page)
- *Framing of the athlete in the image:* assessed across two binary dimensions: a) positive (yes/no): presence of visual elements that highlight or celebrate the athlete; b) negative (yes/no): presence of visual elements that diminish, stigmatise, or symbolically penalise the athlete.

To test the association between the variables, cross-tabulations were conducted using Pearson's Chi-square test, likelihood ratio, and Fisher's exact test (to small sample), with a significance level set at 5% ($p < .05$).

Table 132 Image size, positive and negative framing of female athletes

Image size	Positive framing	Numbers of images	Negative Framing	Numbers of the image
Small (< ¼ page)	Yes	10	Yes	1
Small (< ¼ page)	No	5	No	14
Medium or large (≥ ¼ page)	Yes	9	Yes	0
Medium or large (≥ ¼ page)	No	0	No	9
Positive framing	Pearson's chi-square: $\chi^2(1) = 3.789$, $p = .052$ Likelihood ratio: 5.468, $p = .01$ Fisher's exact test (2-sided): $p = .118$			
Negative framing	Pearson's chi-square: $\chi^2(1) = 0.626$, $p = .429$ Likelihood ratio: 0.966, $p = .32$ Fisher's exact test (2-sided): $p = 1.000$			

The results indicate a significant association between image size and the positive framing of female athletes. While only 66.7% of small images were associated with positive representations, all medium or large images (100%) showed positive framing of female athletes. The statistical significance of the likelihood ratio ($p < .05$) reinforces this trend, even though Pearson's chi-square test yields a marginal result ($p = .052$).

This pattern may reflect a conscious editorial decision: when female athletes are given greater visual prominence, this visibility tends to be accompanied by positive visual narratives, such as the celebration of achievements, displays of leadership, or sources of inspiration. Such visual choices suggest a differentiated way of presenting women in sport, symbolically attributing them greater value when there is more graphic investment.

On the other hand, no association was observed between image size and negative framing. Only one isolated case of negative framing occurred among small images, and none were recorded for larger images. This may indicate that visual prominence is rarely used to reinforce stigma or criticism in the case of female athletes — or that, when negative representation does occur, it tends to be visually de-emphasised.

PT1.7. Synthesis of the findings of newspapers' articles

The analysis of Portuguese print sports media, conducted within the framework of the POWER project, reveals a persistent structural imbalance in the representation of female athletes. Despite some encouraging findings — such as the near absence of sexist language, objectification, or stereotypical narratives — the presence of women remains quantitatively limited. **Among the 62 print editions analysed, only 24 featured female athletes, indicating that their inclusion is still exceptional and not part of a consistent editorial strategy. This under-representation reinforces symbolic marginalisation, reducing the visibility and legitimacy of women in sport within public discourse.**

The use of Gephi proved effective in visualising and interpreting the connections between journalistic discourse and categories of symbolic appreciation, allowing for a structural reading of how female athletes are positively portrayed in the media. The network analysis showed that, although thematic diversity exists, the celebration of achievements and the construction of inspirational images remain the central pillars of positive representations.

Nevertheless, **the data suggest that when female athletes are represented, they are generally framed in a respectful and positive manner, both textually and visually. Positive framing is often linked to themes such as talent, leadership, and achievement, particularly when larger or more prominent images are used.** This may reflect a deliberate editorial choice to highlight and celebrate their presence. However, this positive treatment must be critically examined within the broader context of media exclusion: recognition without proportional visibility does not equate to equity. Addressing this imbalance requires not only fairer framing practices, but above all, a greater and more regular inclusion of female athletes in the sports media agenda.

PT2. Online sports magazines analysis

The sample of online sports publications analysed in Portugal comprised five specialised digital magazines: BIKE, Equitação Magazine, Medicina Desportiva, MOTO Portugal, and Pro Runners. These platforms represent niche segments within the broader sports media ecosystem, focusing on specific disciplines such as cycling, equestrian sports, sports medicine, motorcycling, and athletics.

A total of 36 entries were collected from these outlets, covering publication dates between June 2024 and January 2025. The selected articles span various weekdays and reflect the diversity of editorial calendars across different online media. This sample provides insight into the visibility and representation of athletes—both male and female—within highly specialised sports journalism contexts in Portugal.

PT2.1. Number of analysed articles per online sports magazines

The table below summarises the number of entries collected from each of the five online sports magazines. It reflects the total number of editions analysed per outlet, regardless of gender focus or athlete type:

Table 133 Distribution of the article per online sports magazine

Online Sports Magazine	Number of articles	Percentage
BIKE	4	11.1%
Equitação Magazine	8	22.2%
Medicina Desportiva	8	22.2%
MOTO Portugal	12	33.3%
Pro Runners	4	11.1%
Total	36	100%

Among them, Equitação Magazine and MOTO Portugal provided the highest number of entries, offering multiple editions for analysis. In contrast, platforms such as BIKE and Medicina Desportiva showed no content referencing female athletes across the selected days. This illustrates the challenges in achieving gender-balanced representation even in niche or non-mainstream online sport journalism, with male athletes consistently receiving the majority of dedicated articles. Only a few exceptions—most notably within Equitação Magazine and Pro Runners—included notable mentions or dedicated coverage of female athletes.

PT2.2. Period of the data collection

Tables 134 and 135 present the distribution of the 36 entries analysed from Portuguese online sports magazines according to the month and day of publication. Data were collected between

June 2024 and January 2025, offering a temporal snapshot across multiple seasons and editorial cycles.

Table 134 Distribution of the article per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	4	11.1%
July/24	4	11.1%
August/24	8	22.2%
September/24	4	11.1%
October/24	4	11.1%
November/24	4	11.1%
December/24	4	11.1%
January/25	4	11.1%
Total	36	100%

Table 134 shows that August 2024 accounted for the highest proportion of entries (22.2%), followed by a balanced distribution across other months. Each of the remaining months—June, July, September, October, November, December, and January—contributed 11.1% of the sample. This relatively even distribution supports a comprehensive view of coverage patterns over time, mitigating the risk of seasonal bias.

Table 135 Distribution of the article per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	16	44.4%
Tuesday	8	22.2%
Wednesday	3	8.3%
Thursday	4	11.1%
Friday	4	11.1%
Total	36	100%

Table 135 reveals that Mondays represented the most common day of publication (44.4%), followed by Tuesdays (22.2%). Other weekdays, including Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, each represented smaller proportions of the sample (between 8.3% and 11.1%). The predominance of Monday publications could reflect editorial cycles that prioritise weekend sports summaries or athlete features. The diversity in publication days adds robustness to the sample by avoiding overreliance on a single day or pattern of coverage.

PT2.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This section compares the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per Online Sports Magazine edition. The data were grouped into ranges based on the volume of coverage observed. Notably, 12 editions contained no reference to male athletes, which is particularly relevant when considering the overall gender dynamics.

Table 136 indicates whether each of the 36 analysed editions mentioned female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of editions without any mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility in online sports media.

Table 136 Mention of female athletes in the online newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	7	19.4%
No	29	80.6%
Total	36	100%

Only 19.4% of editions mentioned female athletes, while the majority (80.6%) excluded them entirely. This finding highlights a pronounced gender disparity within the online sports outlets analysed. The data confirm that women continue to be overlooked in the digital sports media space, regardless of the sports covered.

Table 137 presents the distribution of article counts dedicated to male and female athletes across the 36 editions.

Table 137 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes in online newspapers

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	12	26
One	4	4
Between 2 and 4	14	4
Between 5 and 8	8	2
More than 8	8	0
Total (valid responses)	36	

For male athletes, eight editions (22.2%) featured more than eight articles, and another eight editions (22.2%) had between five and eight. Together, these account for 44.4% of all entries, revealing a dominant presence of male-focused sports content. An additional eight editions included between one and four articles on male athletes, while 12 editions (33.3%) contained no male coverage—largely from outlets without sport-specific articles, from this sample and in this period.

In stark contrast, 72.2% of the editions (26 out of 36) did not include any articles dedicated to female athletes. When women were mentioned, the coverage was generally minimal: only four editions had one article, and another four included between two and four. Just two editions (5.6%) contained more than four articles related to women, all published in *Equitação Magazine*, a niche publication. These results reflect the marginal visibility of female athletes even in online platforms focused on specific sports domains.

From this sample and in this period, this analysis reinforces the broader finding of systemic underrepresentation of women in Portuguese sports journalism. The low frequency and

superficial nature of female-focused coverage underscore the persistence of gender bias within both mainstream and niche digital sports

PT2.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the full set of observations, only seven articles were identified that included substantive content related to female athletes across the Portuguese online sports magazines. These articles form the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented within this segment of the sports media, focusing on the type of sport and the competitive level of the athletes featured. It is important to clarify that, although Table 5 shows that 10 editions included at least one article mentioning female athletes, only seven articles were selected for in-depth analysis. This is because the remaining articles contained only brief or incidental references to women or did not meet the predefined inclusion criteria for qualitative analysis, such as having a clear focus on a female athlete, sufficient textual content, or relevance to the sporting context. As such, the following analysis is based exclusively on the subset of articles that offered adequate depth for meaningful interpretation.

Table 138 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Portugal (n = 7)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	3	41.7%
	Individual sports	4	58.3%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	4	57.1%
	Grassroots	1	14.3%
	Professional	1	14.3%
	Olympic	1	14.3%

Individual sports were slightly more prominent than team sports, appearing in 57.1% of the articles. Team sports — all associated with equestrianism presented as mixed team events — accounted for the remaining 42.9%. This suggests a modest tendency to highlight individual performance in niche or solo disciplines.

In terms of competitive level, most articles focused on amateur athletes (57.1%), while grassroots, professional, and Olympic levels were each represented in just one case (14.3%). This limited presence of high-performance female athletes reveals an editorial gap in the coverage of elite women's sport, while also highlighting a lack of attention to community and developmental levels of female participation.

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of specialised online sports magazines. While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Portuguese sports media, they are aligned with patterns identified in previous research: a tendency to marginalise female athletes, especially outside of major events or disciplines perceived as traditionally feminine.

PT2.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

As mentioned previously, the Portuguese sample included a total of seven articles that featured female athletes. The analysis of these articles revealed no instances of sexist language or the use of derogatory expressions based on gender. This suggests that, at least within this specific subset of online sports magazines, journalistic discourse tends to avoid overtly discriminatory terminology.

None of the articles trivialised the performance of female athletes. No examples were found of language that diminished their achievements, presented them as less competent, or reduced their role to secondary importance. Similarly, there were no identifiable gender stereotypes or content that reinforced traditional gender roles within the analysed texts.

Importantly, there were also no occurrences of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes in the content, nor any instance in which women were negatively framed. These results point to an editorial tendency towards neutrality or respect in the treatment of female athletes when they are indeed represented.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that these findings refer to a very limited and specialised sample, which does not reflect the full breadth of Portuguese sports media. While the absence of overtly sexist content is encouraging, it likely reflects the characteristics of the niche outlets included in this study rather than a broader transformation in media practices. These results are therefore aligned with previous research that suggests that female athletes tend to receive more neutral coverage when they are represented, although their overall visibility remains limited.

PT2.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

In the sample of seven articles that mentioned female athletes in Portuguese online sports magazines, none exhibited negative framing. This result suggests that, within this limited subset, women were portrayed in a generally respectful and affirmative manner, with no references to controversies, disciplinary issues, or criticism of performance.

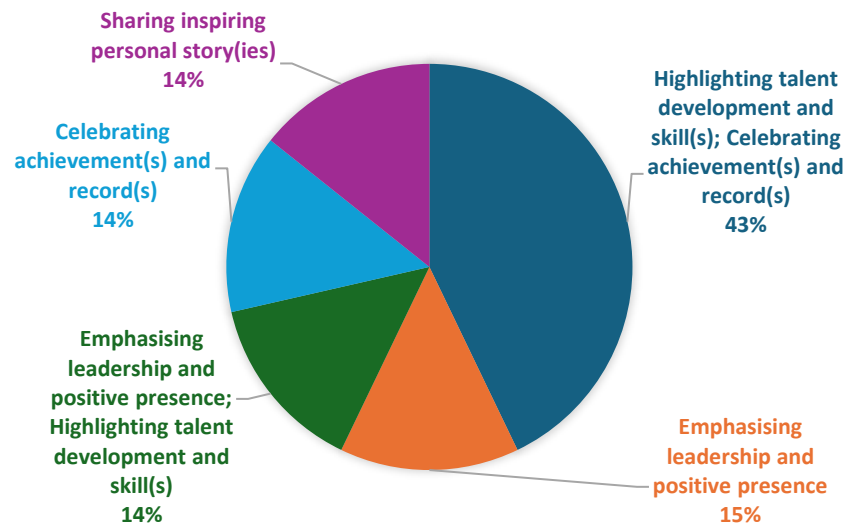


Figure 39 Categorisation of positive framing text

On the other hand, the qualitative analysis of positive framing revealed five recurring patterns. The most frequent was the combination of celebrating achievements and highlighting talent development, present in 42.9% of the articles. One article (14.3%) focused solely on leadership and positive presence, while another combined leadership with recognition of talent and skills. In the remaining cases, one article (14.3%) centred exclusively on celebrating sporting accomplishments, and another emphasised an inspiring personal story.

Although these results indicate a constructive approach to the portrayal of female athletes, they should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size. Moreover, the findings align with previous research showing that when women are included in sports media, their visibility is often linked to exceptional performance, which may inadvertently reinforce the notion that women must “prove their worth” to earn media coverage.

PT2.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

All seven articles that featured female athletes in the Portuguese sample included at least one image of the mentioned athletes, confirming a 100% inclusion rate. In four of these articles (57.1%), there was only one image. In the remaining three articles (42.9%), two or more images were identified. These findings suggest that, although the presence of images is consistent, more extensive visual representation (i.e., multiple images) occurs in less than half of the cases. Still, the visual inclusion of female athletes, when they are represented in the content, appears to be a regular editorial practice within the analysed outlets.

PT2.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the images

Among the seven analysed articles containing images of female athletes, no instances of sexist language, gender stereotypes, objectification, sexualisation, or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visuals. Likewise, no cases of negative framing were observed, suggesting

a tendency to avoid discriminatory or demeaning visual practices when female athletes are represented in this type of specialised publication.

On the other hand, all the images (100%) displayed positive framing, indicating a predominantly appreciative approach to portraying women in sport. The identified categories of positive framing reflect themes such as talent, leadership, success, and inspiring stories.

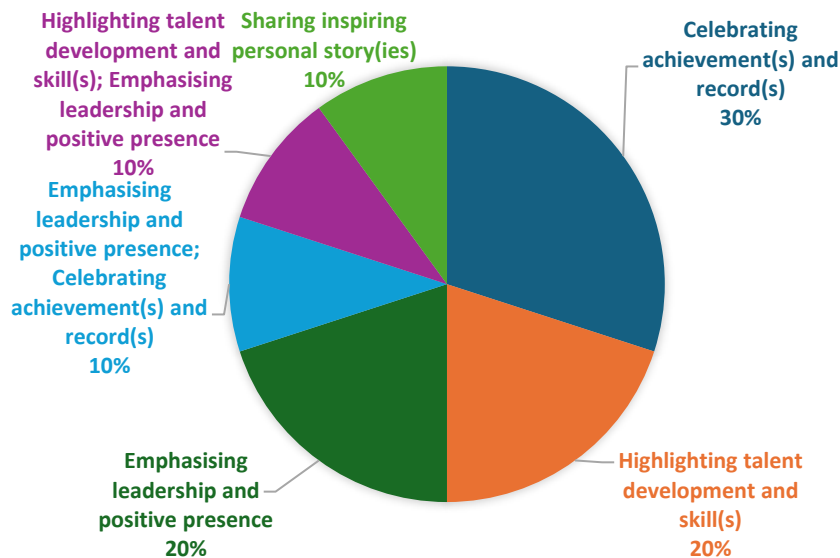


Figure 40 Categorisation of positive framing images

These visual representations are consistent with the patterns observed in the textual content, reinforcing positive symbolic attributes such as leadership, competence, and personal achievement. Although the sample is small, the data suggest a favourable editorial trend when female athletes are visually featured.

PT2.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the positive framing of female athletes, we analysed the seven articles from the Portuguese sample of online sport magazines that included visual representations of women in sport. This qualitative subsample is notably small and therefore requires cautious interpretation, yet it provides relevant insights into symbolic media representations.

Two main variables were considered in the analysis:

- *Image size*: coded based on the visual coverage in the article (i.e., less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half a page);
- *Positive framing in the image*: identified through previous qualitative codification into categories such as Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s), Highlighting

talent development and skill(s), Emphasising leadership and positive presence, and sharing inspiring personal story(ies).

Table 139 Cross-tabulation of image size and positive framing categories (n = 7)

Image size	Positive framing categories	Frequency	Percentage
Small (< ¼ page)	Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	14.3%
	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s)	1	14.3%
	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s) and Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	14.3%
¼ page	Highlighting talent development and skill(s) and Emphasising leadership and positive presence	1	14.3%
Half a page	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s) and Emphasising leadership and positive presence	1	14.3%
More than half the article	Sharing inspiring personal story(ies)	1	14.3%
Half the article	Celebrating achievement(s) and record(s) and Highlighting talent development and skill(s)	1	14.3%

The cross-tabulation reveals that smaller images (less than a quarter of the page) were associated with relatively simple forms of positive framing, often limited to a single dimension such as achievement or talent. In contrast, larger images (half a page or more) tended to convey more complex or multifaceted framings, frequently combining multiple symbolic elements (e.g., leadership, talent, and celebration).

While each image size group is represented by only one article due to the small sample, the pattern suggests a potential editorial tendency: greater visual prominence appears to be associated with richer and more valorising portrayals of female athletes. For example, the only article coded as more than half was associated with inspiring personal stories, a category that often reflects a deeper narrative engagement.

Methodological note

Given the limited sample size (n=7), this analysis remains exploratory and descriptive. The use of Pearson's chi-square test or other inferential statistics would not be appropriate in this context, as the assumptions of expected frequency and distribution are not met. Nonetheless, the preliminary patterns identified are consistent with broader trends observed in gender and media studies and may inform future investigations with larger datasets.

PT2.7. Synthesis of the findings of sports magazines

The results of the analysis of online **sports magazines in Portugal reveal certain limitations in the dissemination of information about female athletes**. Only 19.4% of the editions analysed mentioned women in sport. Although specialised publications have the potential to offer more

space to less mainstream disciplines, this openness does not translate into gender-balanced representation. Most references to female athletes were occasional, focused on individual sports and at amateur levels, reinforcing an editorial trend of underrepresentation of women's sport. However, in the few cases identified—and in line with the previous analysis—the portrayals were positive, avoiding stereotypes or sexist language, both in the text and in the images.

From a visual perspective, all included images displayed positive framing, highlighting talent, achievements, leadership, and inspiring stories. Nevertheless, the small size of the sample ($n=7$) poses significant limitations and prevents the use of more robust statistical analyses. Despite this, the findings are consistent with those previously observed in the newspaper sample and offer relevant insights for future analyses based on larger and more diverse datasets.



PT3. Social media: X profiles analysis

This section analyses the presence and representation of female athletes in posts published on Portuguese profiles on the platform X (formerly Twitter), within the framework of the POWER project. This stage seeks to understand how institutional and individual profiles within the sports sector contribute (or not) to the visibility of women in the digital space, with particular focus on X, one of the most widely used social media platforms by federations, clubs, journalists, and athletes for the dissemination of real-time sports content.

The analysis focuses on a single day randomly selected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for a punctual yet revealing examination of gender dynamics within the posts. Data collection followed a common protocol established by the POWER project, considering Portuguese profiles with relevant activity on the platform. Two institutional media profiles with a high number of followers (between 200,000 and 1 million) were analysed: one specialising in sport (*Record*) and the other a generalist (*Público*).

PT3.1. Number of analysed posts per X profile

Table 140 presents the distribution of the 59 analysed X posts in the Portuguese case study, according to the institutional X profile from which they originated. Two high-follower national profiles were included: *Record*, a sport-specialised news outlet, and *Público*, a generalist newspaper.

Table 140 Distribution of the X posts per profile

Newspaper	Is this a sports-specialised newspaper?	Number of the X posts	Percentage
Record	Yes	32	54.2%
Público	No	27	45.8%
Total		59	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of posts from both profiles, enabling a comparative analysis between a sport-focused and a general news outlet. *Record*, as a sport-dedicated platform, represents most posts (54.2%), which may reflect its consistent output of sports-related content. However, the significant inclusion of *Público* allows for an assessment of how women's sports are represented outside specialised contexts.

PT3.2. Period of the data collection

Table 141 presents the distribution of the 59 X posts by their month of publication. Data were collected from January 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations.

Table 141 Distribution of the X posts per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage
January/24	2	5%
February/24	3	7.5%
June/24	4	10%
July/24	4	10%
August/24	6	15%
September/24	4	10%
October/24	4	10%
November/24	5	12.5%
December/24	2	5%
January/25	4	10%

The X posts are well distributed over time, covering all seasons. A slight concentration in August 2024 (15%) may reflect increased sports coverage due to Olympic Games. The temporal diversity strengthens the reliability of the sample by reducing bias linked to specific periods.

Table 142 shows the distribution of the 59 X posts according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 142 Distribution of the X posts per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	10.2%
Tuesday	10	16.9%
Wednesday	4	6.8%
Thursday	10	16.9%
Friday	4	6.8%
Saturday	15	25.4%
Sunday	10	16.9%
Total	59	100%

There is a noticeable concentration of X posts published on Saturdays (25.4%), possibly reflecting editorial routines related to weekend sports reporting.

PT3.3. Number of X posts dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of posts on platform X dedicated to male and female athletes on the days when data were collected. It is noteworthy that, out of the 59 posts of the collection, 37 (62.7%) did not include any reference to female athletes (see Table 4).

The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of posts with no mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility within the sports media landscape.

Table 143 Mention of female athletes in the X posts

Do the X posts mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	37.3%
No	37	62.7%
Total	59	100%

Only 37.3% of the posts included any mention of female athletes, while the majority (62.7%) made no reference to them at all.

Table 144 X posts' numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of X posts	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	3	37
One	2	13
Between 2 and 4	10	9
Between 5 and 8	10	-
More than 8	34	-

In the Portuguese case study, a total of 59 posts published on platform X were analysed, distributed across 38 different days. Most of these posts referred to male athletes. Specifically, 34 posts (57.6%) included more than eight mentions of male athletes, and an additional 10 posts (16.9%) referred to between five and eight male athletes. This means that nearly three-quarters (74.6%) of the posts focused predominantly on male athletes, reflecting a significant gender imbalance in the content shared by the analysed profiles.

In contrast, female athletes were absent from 37 out of the 59 posts (62.7%). When present, their representation was generally minimal: 13 posts (22.0%) included a single mention of a female athlete, and only 9 posts (15.3%) had between two and four mentions. Notably, no post referred to more than four female athletes.

These figures refer exclusively to the 59 posts analysed from Portuguese institutional and media profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project. While they do not reflect the entirety of sports communication in Portugal or on the platform, the data suggest that female athletes remain largely invisible in this segment of digital sports media. Even in a fast-paced and socially engaging environment like platform X, women's representation is either absent or marginal, reinforcing patterns of underrepresentation and gender imbalance.

PT3.4. Analysis of female athletes' X posts

Out of the full set of observations, 22 posts were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the X posts from Portuguese profiles (i.e., Record and Público). These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this

segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Table 145 Characteristics of X posts featuring female athletes in Portugal (n = 7)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	12	54.5%
	Individual sports	9	40.9%
	Mixed (team and individual sports)	1	4.5%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	2	9%
	Grassroots	1	4.8%
	Professional	11	52.4%
	Olympic	7	33.3%

Team sports were slightly more prominent than individual sports, appearing in 54.5% of the X posts. In terms of competitive level, most posts focused on Professional athletes (52.4%). Olympic levels were represented in seven cases (33.3%).

It is important to highlight that these results refer specifically to the current sample of the specialised X profile, Record, and non-specialised X profile, Público. While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Portuguese sports media, they are aligned with patterns identified in previous research: a tendency to marginalise female athletes, especially outside of major events or disciplines perceived as traditionally feminine.

PT3.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X posts

As previously mentioned, data collection in Portugal identified 22 X posts that included references to female athletes. The textual analysis of these posts did not reveal any explicit examples of sexist language or derogatory expressions based on gender. Only two posts (9%) showed signs of trivialising female athletes' performance (1) and presenting gender stereotypes (1). These types of narratives reinforce outdated perceptions and deserve critical attention in the context of broader editorial practices.

It is worth highlighting that no cases of sexualisation or objectification of female athletes were identified in the content of these posts, which may indicate a positive development in sports discourse regarding the coverage of women. However, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution, as the sample is relatively small.

In contrast, 11 posts (50%) included positive portrayals of female athletes (see Figure 1). These were conveyed through the celebration of achievements and records, the appreciation of talent and skills, the emphasis on leadership, and the sharing of inspiring personal stories. Such representations point towards a tendency to value the role and accomplishments of women when they are made visible in sports media discourse.

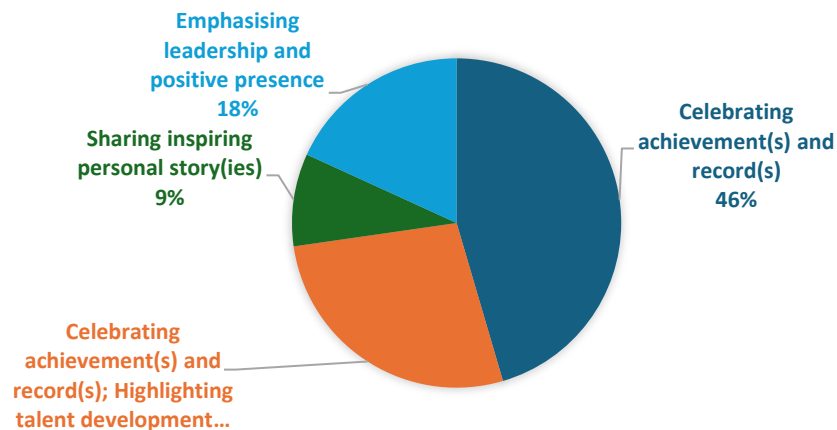


Figure 41 Categorisation of positive framing text

Although these findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of the Portuguese sports media landscape, they provide an indicative picture of how female athletes are represented in the analysed X profiles. The low incidence of negative stereotypes or objectification, combined with the frequency of positive portrayals, may serve as an important indicator.

PT3.5. Presence and number of images in the X posts

Of the 22 X posts that mentioned female athletes, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 14 posts (63.6%) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete(s), while 8 posts (36.4%) did not feature any image. This pattern suggests that, although most posts included visual representation, a considerable proportion still did not use imagery, which may limit the visual impact and visibility of female athletes on social media. The presence of images is particularly relevant for strengthening women's representation in sport, especially on platforms such as X, where visual content is central to reach and audience engagement. It is important to note that these findings refer to a limited sample of Portuguese profiles analysed within the present study and should not be generalised to the entire digital sports media landscape.

PT3.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X post's images

Among the 11 X posts with images mentioning female athletes, no cases of sexualisation, objectification, gender stereotypes or trivialisation of performance were identified in the visual representations. Only one post (9.1%) presented negative framing, related to sanctions or disciplinary issues depicted in the image.

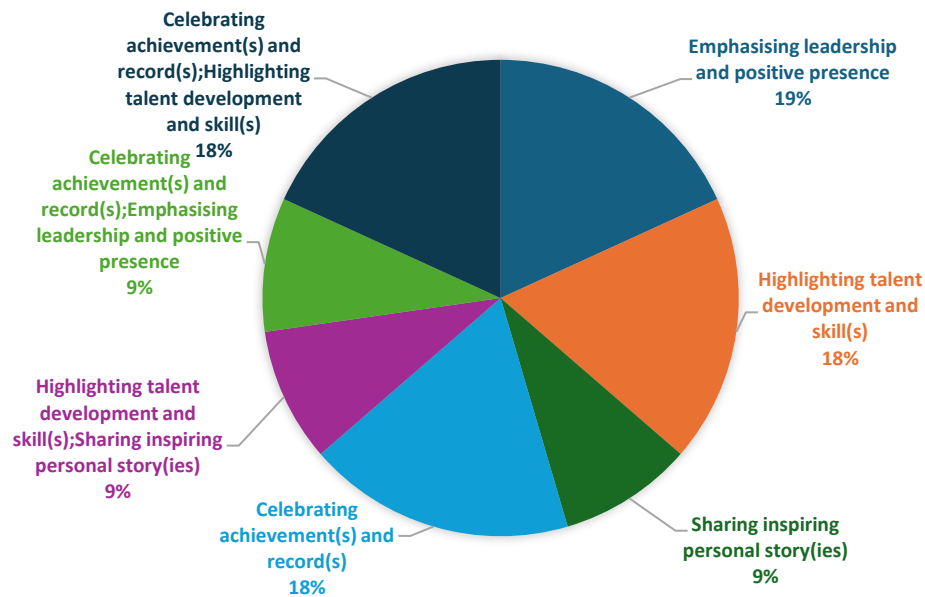


Figure 42 Categorisation of positive framing images

On the other hand, all 11 posts (100%) framed the athletes positively, reinforcing symbolic traits associated with merit, leadership, or inspiration. Although the sample analysed is limited, the absence of sexist representations and the prevalence of affirmative visual narratives may indicate a more respectful and constructive approach in the digital coverage examined.

PT3.6. Synthesis of the findings of X posts

The analysis of Portuguese profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project, offers valuable insights into the digital representation of female athletes. The findings **highlight a clear gender imbalance in sports coverage, with most of the posts analysed (62.7%) containing no reference to female athletes**. Even in cases where they are mentioned, their visibility remains limited. The concentration of content focused on male athletes, particularly within the specialised sports media outlet Record, reinforces patterns already identified in traditional media: the marginalisation of women's sport and the dominance of male-focused narratives.

Despite this imbalance, the tone and content (both textual and visual) of the 22 posts showed no explicit examples of sexist language or clear instances of objectification or sexualisation. Furthermore, half of these posts featured positive framing, highlighting leadership, achievement, talent, or inspiration. This suggests that, when included, female athletes tend to be portrayed with dignity and merit.

However, these findings should be interpreted considering the analysis's limitations. The sample is small (N = 59) and is based on only two institutional media profiles, which may not fully reflect the editorial strategies of these outlets or the broader complexities of gender representation in Portuguese sports media. Additionally, the limited number of posts referencing female athletes

restricts the possibility of conducting inferential statistical analyses. While it is possible to identify descriptive trends, the sample is not sufficiently robust to support generalisations or statistically valid hypothesis testing.

Finally, the **data suggest that female athletes remain underrepresented in the Portuguese digital sports media landscape, even on platforms like X that offer opportunities for more immediate and inclusive content dissemination.** Future research with larger samples, a broader range of profiles (e.g., athletes, federations), and longer timeframes will be essential to confirm these trends and promote a more equitable visibility of women in Portuguese sport.



PT4. Online TV episode analysis

This analysis refers to the Portuguese sample of online TV episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025, within the framework of the POWER project. The study examined the visibility and framing of female athletes in sports-related news segments broadcast by national TV channels.

PT4.1. Number of analysed episodes per TV channel

Table 146 presents the distribution of the 39 analysed episodes according to the TV channel of origin. The sample includes editions from two widely circulated national broadcasters: RTP and TVI. Both are generalist channels with regular sports coverage in their news bulletins.

Table 146 Distribution of the episodes per channel

TV Station	Number of Episodes	Percentage
RTP	20	51.3%
TVI	19	48.7%

The sample is relatively balanced across both channels, allowing a comparative analysis. RTP accounts for just over half of the sample (51.3%), suggesting slightly more frequent inclusion of this channel's episodes.

PT4.2. Period of Data Collection

Table 147 presents the distribution of the 39 episodes by their month of broadcast. The analysis spans from June 2024 to February 2025, covering various seasons and news cycles.

Table 147 Distribution of the episodes by month

Month	Frequency	Percentage
June/24	4	10.3%
July/24	4	10.3%
August/24	4	10.3%
September/24	4	10.3%
October/24	6	15.4%
November/24	4	10.3%
December/24	4	10.3%
January/25	6	15.4%
February/25	3	7.7%

The distribution is well spread over the months. October 2024 and January 2025 had the highest concentration of coded episodes (15.4% each), while February 2025 had the fewest.

PT4.3. Distribution by weekday

Table 148 shows the distribution of episodes according to the weekday they were aired. This allows the identification of editorial routines or trends related to specific days.

Table 148 Distribution of the episodes by weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage
Monday	6	15.4%
Tuesday	6	15.4%
Wednesday	6	15.4%
Thursday	6	15.4%
Friday	5	12.8%
Saturday	6	15.4%
Sunday	4	10.3%

The distribution across weekdays is relatively even, suggesting consistent coverage of sports news throughout the week, without a strong editorial focus on any day.

PT4.4. Analysis of female athletes' TV reports

Out of the entire sample, only 5 episodes included any mention of female athletes in Portugal. These reports form the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in televised sports news.

Table 149 Characteristics of reports featuring female athletes

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the report sport-related?	Team sport	4	80.0%
	Individual sport	1	20.0%
Type of sport featured	Football	3	60.0%
	Judo	1	20.0%
	Basketball	1	20.0%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	5	100.0%

All reports were directly related to sport, primarily focusing on team sports, especially football. There were no references to Olympic or grassroots-level athletes and all featured athletes were professionals.

PT4.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes

None of the five reports trivialised the performance of female athletes, and there were no instances of gender stereotypes in the visuals. This may indicate a positive editorial evolution. Additionally, no report contained sexualised or objectifying imagery of female athletes.

On the contrary, all five reports (100%) framed the female athletes positively, mostly by celebrating achievements or highlighting performance.

Among the five positively framed reports:

- 60% combined celebration of achievements with recognition of talent;
- 40% focused exclusively on achievement;

No reports highlighted leadership, inspiration, or broader narratives.

This shows a tendency to portray female athletes through a performance lens, without deeper exploration of their personal stories or leadership roles.

PT4.4.2 Gender presence and airtime in TV sports reporting

Out of the 39 analysed episodes:

- 33 episodes (84.6%) featured at least one report on male athletes;
- Only 5 episodes (12.8%) mentioned female athletes;

Across all episodes, the total estimated airtime for female athletes was just 7 minutes.

This reflects a significant imbalance in both presence and editorial weight. While men were featured in most episodes, women appeared in less than one out of every eight and even when included, their coverage was brief and isolated.

The cumulative 7 minutes dedicated to women's sport, across all months and broadcasters, emphasises how limited their visibility remains in the public sphere of televised news.

PT4.5. Synthesis of the findings of TV episodes

The analysis of Portuguese television episodes highlights **clear limitations in the visibility and framing of female athletes in televised sports journalism**. It is important to note that the number of coded episodes was relatively small ($n = 39$), of which only five included any reference to female athletes. This limited sample requires caution in the interpretation of the results and does not allow for generalisations regarding the broader Portuguese media landscape. Despite these constraints, the data point to a persistent gender imbalance, which is consistent with previous studies and existing empirical evidence. While male athletes were featured in 84.6% of the episodes analysed, women appeared in only 12.8%. In addition, the total estimated airtime dedicated to female athletes was just 7 minutes. These findings suggest that the presence of women in televised sports news remains sporadic and marginal, and is clearly not part of a consistent editorial strategy.

On the other hand, when female athletes were included, their portrayal was generally positive. The reports focused on athletic performance, achievements, and talent, with no recorded instances of sexist language, sexualisation, trivialisation, or negative framing. **This suggests an editorial tendency to avoid discriminatory discourse. However, such positive framing does not**

compensate for the structural problem of under-representation. Recognition without regular visibility continues to reinforce symbolic marginalisation. Moreover, the type of framing observed was relatively narrow, with no references to leadership, personal narratives, or broader social contributions.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that although the tone of coverage may be evolving in a more positive direction, the frequency and depth of representation remain insufficient. Addressing gender imbalance in sports media therefore requires not only fairer framing practices, but above all a more frequent, diverse, and structured presence of female athletes in the daily media agenda.



PT5. Focus Group analysis

PT5.1 Details of the organised focus group

Date: 18/4/2025

Place: On line

Objective: Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media, discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media

No of participants: 9

Profile of participants: see the table below

Table 150 Focus Group Participants – Profile Summary

Code	Gender	Professional Affiliation	Role / Relevant Background	Inclusion Category
P1	Female	Communication consultant, trainer, radio presenter (projects on female empowerment)	Leadership and communication training in sports; work with Olympic Committee	Media professional
P2	Male	Journalist and former elite athlete	20+ years in journalism; expertise in project management	Journalist
P3	Female	Press officer at sports federation; former journalist at national newspaper	Covered multiple sports; editorial work in male and female athlete coverage	Journalist
P4	Female	Former Olympian, currently coach and sports graduate	Active in youth coaching; former high-performance athlete	Female athlete
P5	Female	Communication/marketing expert, NGO leader, experience in Africa and Europe	Journalism, institutional communication, community engagement	Media professional
P6	Female	Former Olympian (judo), project manager, gender equity specialist	High-level sport + gender policy and project management	Female athlete
P7	Female	Former Olympian, president of national sports foundation	Institutional leadership and advocacy for gender equality in sport	Additional stakeholder (governance)
P8	Male	University professor, sports researcher and moderator	Research and teaching in sports management, gender and media studies	Additional stakeholder (academic/researcher)
P9	Male	Former Olympian, IOC staff member	Elite sports background and current role in international sports governance	Additional stakeholder (IOC/governance)

PT5.2. Thematic analysis

Table 151 Thematic analysis from Portugal

Category: Inequality in Media Coverage		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Difference in coverage between male and female athletes	There is consensus among participants that there is inequality in media coverage between men and women, with men receiving more attention.	P9, P1, P7, P5
Coverage focused on women's emotions and appearance	Coverage of women athletes tends to focus on personal life, appearance or stories of overcoming, rather than sports performance.	P1, P7
Narratives centered on empathy and emotions	Journalistic narratives seek to empathize with the audience by highlighting personal and emotional aspects, not necessarily performance.	P3
Predominance of football and invisibility of other sports	Football dominates the media space, relegating other sports to the background. General sports coverage is scarce and focused on a single sport.	P9, P7
Differences between collective and individual modalities	Collective sports (such as football) have more media visibility, but within these, women have less prominence than men.	P7, P5
Category: Stereotypes and Sexualization		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Emotional stereotypes and feminization of athletes	Media tend to portray female athletes from an emotional or aesthetic perspective, rather than technical performance.	P2, P4
Use of social networks as a space of resistance or reinforcement of stereotypes	Social media allows athletes to have their own voice, but they also encourage self-sexualization to gain visibility.	P9, P2
Lack of inspirational representations and visible examples	The importance of representation is underlined. There is a lack of female media figures, except for cases of excellence such as Telma Monteiro or Rosa Mota.	P5
Sport as a reflection of society	Inequalities in sport are a reflection of broader social inequalities, reinforcing the importance of education from childhood as an instrument of transformation.	P6, P2, P7

Category: Lack of Focus on Performance		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Lack of visibility and appreciation of women's achievements	Women's achievements, especially in individual and combat modalities, receive little attention or are treated superficially.	P4
Structural conditions and number of practitioners as an explanatory factor	The lower visibility of female athletes is also related to the reduced number of women in high performance and top results.	P7
Inequality in coverage between performance and appearance	Observations on how women's sports performance is often overshadowed by issues of appearance or personal life.	P3, P5, P1
Deep-rooted cultural and social context	Sports practice is seen as a pastime, and gender inequality is reinforced by deeply rooted family and social habits, which need to be faced with positive examples and visibility of real stories.	P7
Category: Impact on athletes' careers		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Pressure for self-sexualization for visibility or financial income	Some athletes resort to sexualization on social media to obtain income or prominence, which raises ethical and structural issues.	P9, P2
Lack of recognition and opportunities	Unequal communication directly impacts visibility, access to sponsorships, and the empowerment of future athletes. Cases such as the increase in practitioners after Nuno Delgado's medal contrast with the lower repercussion of women's medals.	P9, P5
Financing and sexualization as a means of survival	Lack of coverage leads some athletes to sexualize their image on social networks to obtain visibility and financial income, which reinforces stereotypes.	P9, P2
Increased challenges of immigrant athletes and mothers	Women who are mothers, immigrants and athletes face multiple challenges that are little recognized in the media.	P4
Category: Sexist and gendered stereotypes		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Sexualization implicit in images and language	Photos, comments and editorial choices reinforce a sexualization of the female image in sport.	P2, P4, P3

Role models and references for young athletes	Sexualized representation can lead young athletes to understand that this is the only way to achieve visibility, which negatively influences the values transmitted.	P5
Influence of male editorial heads	The predominance of men in newsrooms and management positions influences the way content is written and selected.	P3
Category: Need for Change		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Education for communication and empowerment	Need for education of athletes and journalists for conscious, equitable and strategic communication.	P6
Importance of positive visibility	Proposals for greater media coverage with a focus on inspiring stories and training in gender equality for journalists, promoting empathy and rigor in the approach.	P4
The importance of balanced representation in the media	Examples and recommendations on how to promote gender equality in journalistic storytelling while avoiding stereotypes.	P7, P2, P9, P6
Examples of success and narrative change	Cases where the positive representation of women in sport has led to increased practice and visibility.	P9, P2
Importance of diversity and female empowerment	Reflections on the need to show different paths and promote support networks among women in sport.	P6

Category 1: Inequality in Media Coverage

The participants widely acknowledged that female athletes continue to receive significantly less media coverage compared to their male counterparts. This disparity was seen not only in terms of volume but also in the quality of exposure, with women's sports often relegated to secondary platforms or reduced to brief mentions, focused on personal life, appearance or stories of overcoming, rather than sports performance. The causes cited included greater media interest in football, audience assumptions, and entrenched editorial routines.

Implication: This imbalance perpetuates the invisibility of female athletes and hinders the public's perception of their legitimacy and value. Without equal representation, female athletes remain at a disadvantage in achieving recognition, securing sponsorships, and inspiring future generations.

Category 2: Stereotypes and Sexualisation

Participants pointed out the persistent use of stereotypes and sexualised representations in media portrayals of women athletes. Rather than focusing on skill or achievement, coverage often emphasises physical attractiveness, femininity, or emotion. This was seen as both a reflection of societal norms and a deliberate media strategy to increase appeal.

Implication: Such framing reinforces gender roles and undermines athletic credibility. It also limits how women athletes are perceived by audiences and may discourage young girls from identifying with strong athletic role models, thereby weakening gender equity in sports participation and perception.

Category 3: Lack of Focus on Performance

The group identified a recurring issue where women athletes are interviewed or portrayed based on their personal lives, appearance, or emotional experiences, rather than their training, achievements, or competition strategies. This superficial focus was seen as both reductive and damaging.

Implication: When the media fails to highlight athletic performance, it devalues the core contribution of women in sports. This undermines efforts to elevate women athletes to the same professional stature as men and fails to promote sports as a space of equality and meritocracy.

Category 4: Impact on Athletes' Careers

Participants highlighted the practical consequences of limited and biased media representation: fewer sponsorships, less funding, and limited engagement and a greater need for exposure that may tend to sexualise the image of the female athlete. Visibility was directly linked to opportunities for professional advancement.

Implication: Media misrepresentation not only affects perception but also the career trajectory and economic stability of women athletes. Correcting this imbalance is essential to building

Category 5: Sexist and Gendered Stereotypes

Implication: Media has a powerful role in shaping societal views. Challenging these ingrained stereotypes requires both structural change in media institutions and better training for journalists to consciously avoid biased language or imagery.

There was a shared call for change, from increasing the presence of women in editorial positions to empowering athletes with tools for strategic self-representation. Participants agreed that transformative practices in communication, education, and policy are needed.

PT5.3. Word cloud analysis



Synthesis of the findings – Portugal

The cross-format analysis conducted in **Portugal reveals a clear and persistent under-representation of female athletes in sports media.** It is important to highlight that data collection took place during the Olympic period, which would typically be expected to increase media coverage of women's sport. However, the findings suggest otherwise. Across newspapers, online magazines, social media platforms, and television news, women's presence was limited, fragmented, and largely confined to high-performance contexts. Portugal has a strong tradition in several female-dominated individual sports, yet this diversity was not reflected in the media. The dominant presence of football in the national sports news agenda appears to exacerbate this disparity, often overshadowing other disciplines and further marginalising female athletes.

In the print media sample, only 24 out of 62 editions included any mention of female athletes. **While the tone of coverage was generally positive and free from sexist language, the representation was narrow, focusing almost exclusively on achievements and talent, with few references to leadership or personal narratives. Visual framing followed a similar pattern, with most images presented in small formats and limited prominence.**

In the case of online sports magazines, only 7 of the 31 analysed editions featured any reference to female athletes. Once again, the representation was positive but infrequent and lacked thematic depth. Coverage concentrated primarily on individual sports and grassroots contexts, with very little engagement in broader storytelling or sustained visibility.

The analysis of social media focused on posts from the institutional X (formerly Twitter) accounts of *Record* and *Público*. Out of 59 posts, only 22 mentioned female athletes. These posts tended to be short, often without images, and mostly concentrated on performance or achievements. While the absence of sexualisation and stereotypical language is notable, the limited frequency and visual visibility raise questions about editorial priorities and digital engagement strategies.

Television coverage presented the most striking example of marginalisation. Among 39 episodes analysed, only five included references to female athletes. The total airtime dedicated to women was just 7 minutes. Although the tone was positive and performance-oriented, the narrow thematic focus and lack of continuity point to the absence of a consistent editorial strategy aimed at promoting gender equity in sports news.

Finally, the focus group discussions reinforced the patterns observed across formats. Participants identified structural barriers such as editorial routines centred on men's football, a lack of professional development for journalists in gender-sensitive reporting, and the absence of regulatory or institutional incentives to support balanced representation. They also highlighted the long-term impact of under-representation on female athletes' careers, visibility, and access to sponsorship.

It is essential to acknowledge that some of the samples were small, which limits the possibility of drawing general conclusions. Nevertheless, the consistency of the findings across different formats, platforms, and content types points to a structural issue in the Portuguese media landscape. Recognition without regular, diverse, and meaningful visibility continues to reinforce symbolic marginalisation. Addressing gender imbalance in sports media therefore requires not only the elimination of stereotypes, but above all the integration of female athletes into the daily news agenda in a sustained and strategic manner.



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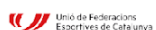
Unió de Federacions
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“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
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Introduction

In Spain, the sporting landscape continues to display stark gender inequalities in both participation and representation. Despite increased engagement of women in various sporting roles, leadership positions remain overwhelmingly dominated by men. In 2023, only 11.1% of the presidencies of Catalan sports federations were held by women, and by 2024, women represented just 18.9% of all registered coaches (Observatori Català de l'Esport, 2023–2024).

This imbalance extends to media coverage. Research on Spanish sports press from 1979 to 2016 consistently reveals the systematic underrepresentation of female athletes and journalists (Sáinz de Baranda Andujar, 2013; Gómez-Colell et al., 2017; Salido-Fernández, 2022). Women sports journalists remain a minority and tend to cover traditionally “feminine” disciplines or women’s competitions more frequently (Salido-Fernández, 2022). Moreover, when female figures appear in sports media, they are often portrayed in stereotypical roles — not as athletes, but as guests, supporters, or family members (Sáinz de Baranda Andujar, 2014).

Such portrayals reinforce gendered narratives and perpetuate the invisibility of women in sport, echoing the idea that “sport continues to exist by, for, and about men” (Gómez-Colell et al., 2017). These findings point to an enduring symbolic marginalisation and highlight the pressing need for a more equitable and inclusive approach in Spanish sports media representation.

ES1. Newspaper Magazine Analysis – Print Media

This initial analysis refers to the newspapers under review. A sample of 80 newspaper editions published in Spain between June 2024 and February 2025 was analysed, with data collection taking place between February and April 2025.

ES1.1. Number of analysed articles per newspaper

Table 152 shows the distribution of the 80 newspaper editions included in the Spanish case study, according to their outlet of origin. The sample consists of 20 editions from each of the following national newspapers: *Marca*, *Sport*, *El Periódico*, and *El Mundo*. While *Marca* and *Sport* are specialised sport newspapers, *El Periódico* and *El Mundo* are general-interest publications. This balanced selection allows for a comparative analysis between specialised and non-specialised media, offering insights into how women’s sport is portrayed across different editorial profiles.

Table 152 Distribution of the article per journals

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number editions	Percentage
Marca	Yes	20	25%
Sport	Yes	20	25%
El Periódico	No	20	25%
El Mundo	No	20	25%
Total		80	100%

ES1.2. Period of the data collection

Table 153 presents the distribution of the 176 articles identified across the 80 analysed publications, according to their month of publication. Data were collected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for the observation of potential seasonal or contextual variations in coverage.

Table 153 Distribution of the article per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage	Days analysed
Jun/24	20	12,5%	2
Jul/24	20	12,5%	2
Aug/24	35	21,25%	2
Sep/24	11	6,87%	2
Oct/24	25	10%	3
Nov/24	14	8,75%	2
Dec/24	14	8,75%	2
Jan/25	17	7%	3
Feb/25	20	12,5%	2
Total	176	100%	

To ensure comparability across months, a weighted percentage was calculated. While most months included two newspaper editions, October and January had three editions analysed. As a result, raw counts of articles would naturally be higher in those months. To address this, the percentages were adjusted to account for the different number of editions analysed per month. This means that the values presented reflect the proportional media coverage, not just the absolute number of articles, and can therefore be reliably compared across all months.

The articles are distributed across all months from June 2024 to February 2025, ensuring broad temporal coverage. A notable concentration occurs in August 2024 (21.25%), likely driven by the Olympic Games held during that month. While June and July (12.5% each) may reflect increased attention due to pre-Olympic coverage, the remaining months show more moderate levels.

Despite this peak, the temporal spread contributes to the reliability of the sample by reducing potential bias associated with a single time frame.

Table 154 shows the distribution of the 176 articles according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week.

Table 154 Distribution of the article per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Percentage	Days analysed
Monday	30	14,6%	3
Tuesday	12	8,8%	2
Wednesday	19	9,2%	3
Thursday	20	14,6%	2
Friday	36	17,6%	3
Saturday	26	19%	2
Sunday	33	16,1%	3
Total	176	100%	20

A similar weighting was applied for the day-of-week analysis, as the number of editions varied (two or three) depending on the day. There is a noticeable concentration of articles published on weekends, particularly on Saturdays (19%) and Sundays (16.1%), suggesting strong media activity around sports events. Friday also registers a high percentage (17.6%), possibly due to previews or build-ups to weekend competitions. While Tuesday (8.8%) and Wednesday (9.2%) show lower frequencies, the presence of articles across all days of the week indicates a continuous coverage pattern beyond major event days. This distribution contributes to the overall reliability of the sample by avoiding a narrow focus on a specific day or time slot.

ES1.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This comparison presents the number of editions that include any mention of female athletes. Table 155 shows that, out of the 80 editions analysed, 62 (77.5%) include at least one reference to female athletes, while 18 editions (22.5%) do not mention them at all. No edition was found without any kind of sports content. This dichotomous distribution (yes/no) helps illustrate the persistence of gender imbalances in sports media coverage and highlights the extent to which women athletes remain underrepresented in a significant share of the news editions.

Table 155 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	62	77,5%
No	18	22,5%
Editions with no sports mentioning	0	0%
Total	80	100%

A significant 77.5% of the analysed editions included some mention of female athletes, while 22.5% did not reference them at all. Although the overall visibility of women in sports news is present in the majority of editions, the fact that nearly one in four still omits female athletes reflects a persistent gender gap. This suggests that female representation in sports journalism, while present, is still not guaranteed and varies across editions.

Table 156 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	-	18
One	-	20
Between 2 and 4	9	28
Between 5 and 8	25	12
More than 8	46	2
Editions with no sports mentioning	-	-
Total (valid responses)	80	

Almost six out of ten editions (57.5%) included more than eight articles focusing on male athletes, clearly demonstrating the dominant presence of men's sport in the newspaper coverage. If we include those with between five and eight articles (25 editions, 31.25%), the proportion rises to 88.75%. This distribution strongly reinforces the gender imbalance in media attention, with male athletes consistently receiving more extensive coverage.

By contrast, the coverage of female athletes is significantly lower and more limited. Most editions (66.25%) included between zero and one article referring to women: 18 editions with no mention and 20 with just one article. Only 28 editions (35%) featured between two and four articles on female athletes, and only 12 (15%) included five to eight articles. A mere 2 editions (2.5%) had more than eight. This fragmented and modest presence highlights the marginalisation of women in sports news and suggests that their representation remains sporadic, inconsistent, and largely secondary within the overall sports media landscape.

ES1.3.1. Comparison between the media coverage of male and female athletes

To compare the media visibility of male and female athletes, we transformed the frequency categories into **ordinal scores** to approximate the number of articles per edition:

- *None* = 0
- *One* = 1
- *Between 2 and 4* = 3
- *Between 5 and 8* = 6.5
- *More than 8* = 9

Although this is not a continuous measure, this transformation allows for a **quantitative comparison of average media presence** between genders.

Using this scoring system, we computed the **mean coverage score** for each group:

- **Male athletes:** M = 7.24, SD = 1.73
- **Female athletes:** M = 2.01, SD = 2.12

Given the ordinal nature of the data, a **Mann–Whitney U test** was conducted to assess whether the differences were statistically significant. The results showed a **highly significant difference** between the two groups:

U = 235.5, p < .001, indicating that **male athletes consistently receive more coverage** than female athletes.

The effect size, calculated using $r = Z / \sqrt{N}$, was **r = 0.78**, suggesting a **very large effect** (Cohen, 1988³).

It is important to note that the value assigned to the “more than 8” category (coded as 9) is likely to **underestimate the true media presence** of male athletes. In many editions — especially in sports-focused newspapers — the actual number of articles about male athletes **may exceed 30 per edition**, which this method cannot fully capture. This limitation means that the **real disparity may be even greater** than indicated by the present analysis.

These findings confirm a substantial and persistent asymmetry in media coverage. While men dominate the sports news landscape, women’s presence remains fragmented and marginal.

ES1.4. Analysis of female athletes’ articles

A total of 176 articles mentioning female athletes were selected for analysis. Although the total number of articles identified was higher, the analysis was limited to a maximum of five articles per edition in cases where the number of relevant articles exceeded that threshold. These 176 articles form the basis for a more detailed examination of how women are represented in sports journalism. The following section explores various aspects of these articles, such as the type of sport, the narrative approach, and the visibility of female athletes.

Table 157 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Spain (n = 167)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the article sport-related?	Yes	171	97,2%
	No	5	2,8%
Type of sport featured	Team sports	91	51.7%
	Individual sports	77	43,75%

³ Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

	Both	8	4,5%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	99	56,25%
	Olympic	61	34,7%
	Amateur	10	5,7%
	Grassroots	3	1,7%
	Mixed	3	1,7%

The vast majority of articles featuring female athletes (97.2%) are directly related to sport, confirming that women's presence in the media is predominantly framed within their athletic roles. Only 2.8% of the articles are non-sport-related, which, although minimal, suggests occasional portrayals in lifestyle or social contexts where sporting achievements may be secondary. This small percentage still highlights the importance of remaining critical about how female athletes are represented editorially.

In terms of the type of sport, team sports appear slightly more frequently than individual sports (51.7% vs. 43.75%), which contrasts with findings in other contexts where individual sports often dominate. This variation is likely influenced by the strong cultural relevance and media presence of football in Spain, which significantly shapes coverage patterns. The remaining 4.5% of articles refer to both types.

When it comes to the competitive level of the athletes featured, professional sport accounts for the majority of coverage (56.25%), followed by Olympic-level athletes (34.7%). Amateur, grassroots, and mixed-level representations remain extremely low, each below 6%. This distribution suggests that media visibility for women in sport remains largely tied to elite competition, leaving grassroots and amateur athletes underrepresented and their contributions to sport less visible to the public.

ES1.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

A total of 176 articles about female athletes were analysed. Instances of sexist language were identified in 15 articles (8.5%), while trivialisation of performance occurred in 22 articles (12.5%). Within this latter category, 5 articles framed achievements in a way that downplayed the athlete's accomplishments, whereas 17 adopted a sensationalist tone, exaggerating or dramatizing the narrative rather than focusing on athletic merit.

Gender stereotypes were present in 51 articles (29%). The most common was assumed emotionalism, appearing in 44 of these 51 cases (86%). Other recurring frames included the portrayal of women as secondary to men (3 articles), the reinforcement of traditional gender roles (20 articles), the questioning of femininity (1 article), and the suggestion that success is linked to physical appearance (2 articles).

Despite the prevalence of stereotypical portrayals and various forms of symbolic devaluation, it is notable that none of the articles included sexualised language or sexualisation of the athletes.

This absence suggests a certain boundary of respect in journalistic tone, even when other forms of gender bias persist.

ES1.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

Among the 176 articles analysed, 24 (13.6%) included negative framing of the female athlete. These cases primarily focused on injuries or physical limitations (8 articles, 33.3% of negatively framed pieces), sanctions or disciplinary issues (7 articles, 29.2%), and failure or underperformance (14 articles, 58.3%). Although these frames represent a minority of the sample, their presence raises concerns about the persistence of narratives that may symbolically undermine female athletes' visibility and credibility.

In contrast, 167 articles (94.9%) demonstrated positive framing. The qualitative categorisation of these articles revealed several overlapping patterns. The most common was the celebration of achievements and records, present in 134 articles (80.2% of positively framed cases). Talent development was highlighted in 89 articles (53.3%), often in combination with other elements. Additionally, inspiring personal stories featured in 32 articles (19.2%), and leadership or positive influence was emphasised in 30 cases (18%).

These findings suggest that while symbolic devaluation still appears in some narratives, the dominant tone in sports coverage of female athletes was largely affirmative, with a strong focus on merit, potential, and inspirational value.

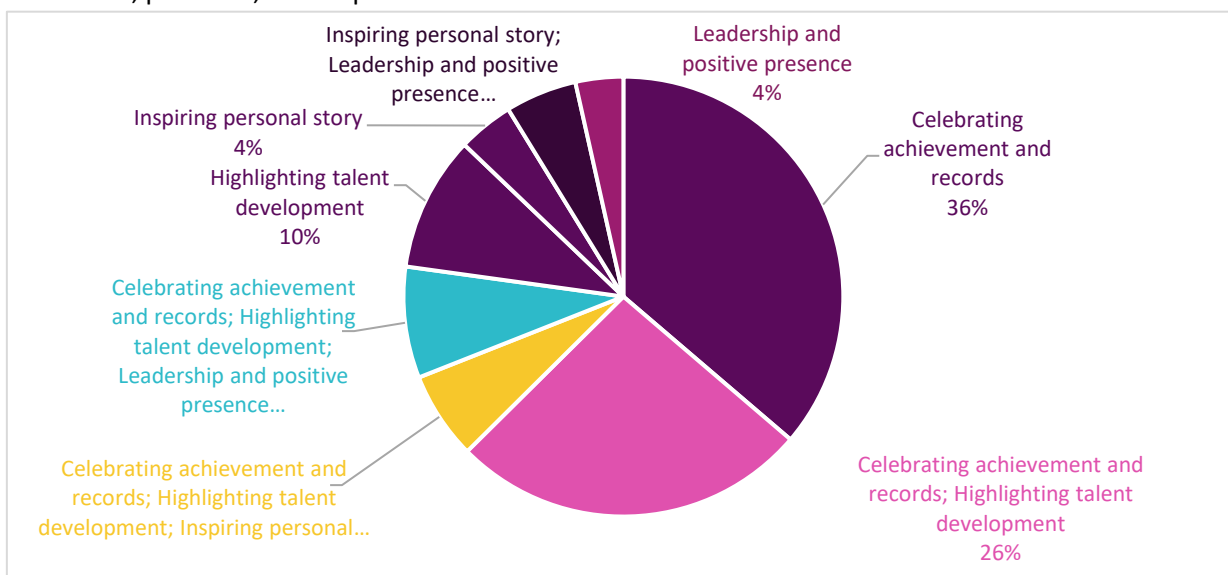


Figure 44 Categorisation of positive framing text

These data indicate that the recognition of performance and the attribution of positive traits such as talent, leadership, and inspiration are the most common forms of positive textual framing found in the articles from Spain.

ES1.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

Among the 176 articles analysed, 161 included images. However, in 10 of these, the images depicted only male figures (such as coaches or staff), leaving a total of 151 articles that included images of female athletes. In 124 of these cases (82.1%), there was a single image of the athlete.

In 14 articles (9.3%), two images were included; 7 articles (4.6%) featured three images, and 5 articles (3.3%) included more than three images. These results suggest that while visual representation of female athletes is frequent, it is generally limited to a single image, with only

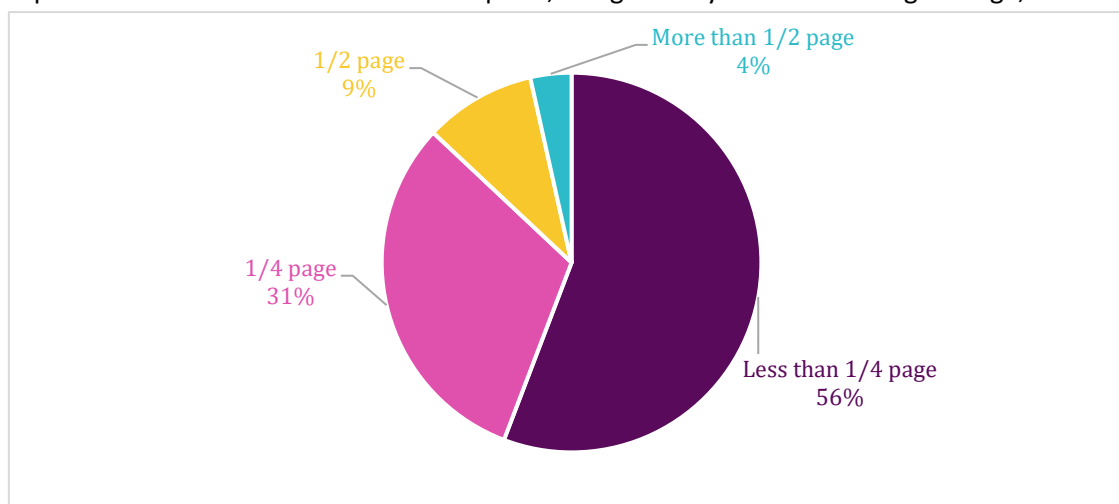


Figure 45 Size of the image

a small number of articles employing more extensive visual coverage.

In terms of visual prominence, there was a clear predominance of smaller image formats (see Figure 45). The majority of images featuring female athletes occupied less than a quarter of a page, while only a small fraction extended beyond half a page. These findings suggest that, although visual representation is present, the editorial space allocated to female athletes remains modest, potentially limiting their visibility and symbolic presence. The scale of the image, not just its presence, plays a crucial role in how athletic achievements are perceived and valued, and the overall trend points to a restrained use of visual emphasis when portraying women in sport.

ES1.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the image

Among the 151 articles containing images of female athletes, 2 cases (1.3%) included elements of sexualisation or objectification, both of which involved posed, provocative representations unrelated to sport performance. Trivialisation of performance was observed in 1 case (0.7%), framed through sensationalism rather than focusing on athletic merit.

Gender stereotypes appeared in 11 visuals (7.3%), including portrayals aligned with traditional gender roles (4 cases), representations of women as secondary to men (3 cases), assumed emotionalism (3 cases), and success linked to appearance (1 case).

ES1.5.2. Negative and positive framing in the images

5 articles (3.3%) presented negative framing, all of which focused on the athlete's failure or underperformance. These results suggest that while the majority of visual portrayals were respectful and performance-oriented, problematic representations persist, albeit in limited frequency.

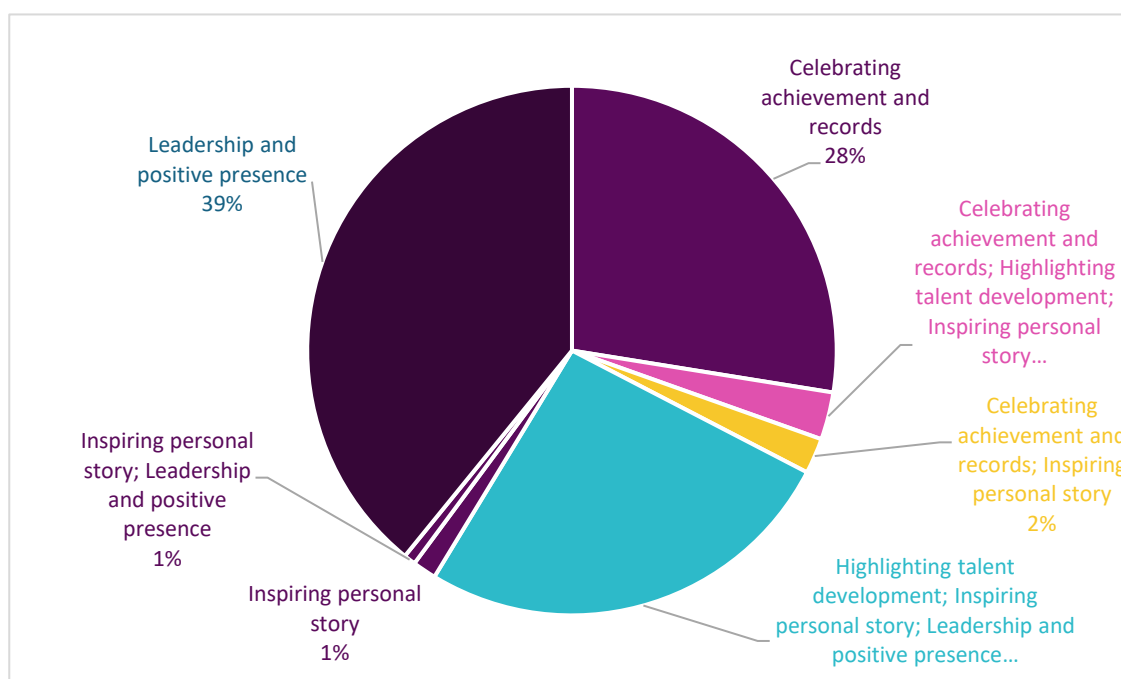


Figure 46 Categorisation of positive framing images

Leadership and positive presence emerged as the most frequent visual framing, appearing in 93 out of 138 cases (67.4%). Other commonly observed framings included celebration of achievements or records in 43 cases (31.2%), inspiring personal stories in 40 cases (29.0%), and highlighting athletic performance in 38 cases (27.5%). Many visuals combined two or more of these elements. Overall, visual framing tended to reinforce symbolic attributes such as leadership, inspiration, and sporting excellence, mirroring the patterns already observed in the textual content and contributing to a cohesive, affirmative portrayal of female athletes.

With the aim of deepening the qualitative analysis of the positive media representations of female athletes, a bipartite network visualisation was created using Gephi software (version 0.10.1). The network was constructed by cross-referencing the headlines of news articles with the previously coded categories of positive framing, such as “celebration of achievements”, “development of talent”, or “leadership and positive presence”.

For this purpose, the network nodes were organised into two distinct types: article headlines and thematic categories, allowing a visual representation of the relationship between the

published content and the symbolic framings attributed to the athletes. The connections (edges) indicate the presence of a specific category within a given headline.

The data were organised into two spreadsheets, one listing the nodes and the other the connections, and were imported into Gephi Software (V. 0.10). Following importation, the ForceAtlas 2 layout algorithm was applied, as it is particularly suitable for networks that exhibit a modular or community-based structure.

The colour and size of the nodes were also adjusted to facilitate visual distinction between the two node types and to highlight their relative importance within the network, with blue used to represent the categories and pink for the headlines. This methodological step enabled a visual identification of patterns of co-occurrence, density of connections, and semantic centrality within the journalistic discourse, clearly revealing the main forms of symbolic appreciation attributed to female athletes in the analysed headlines.

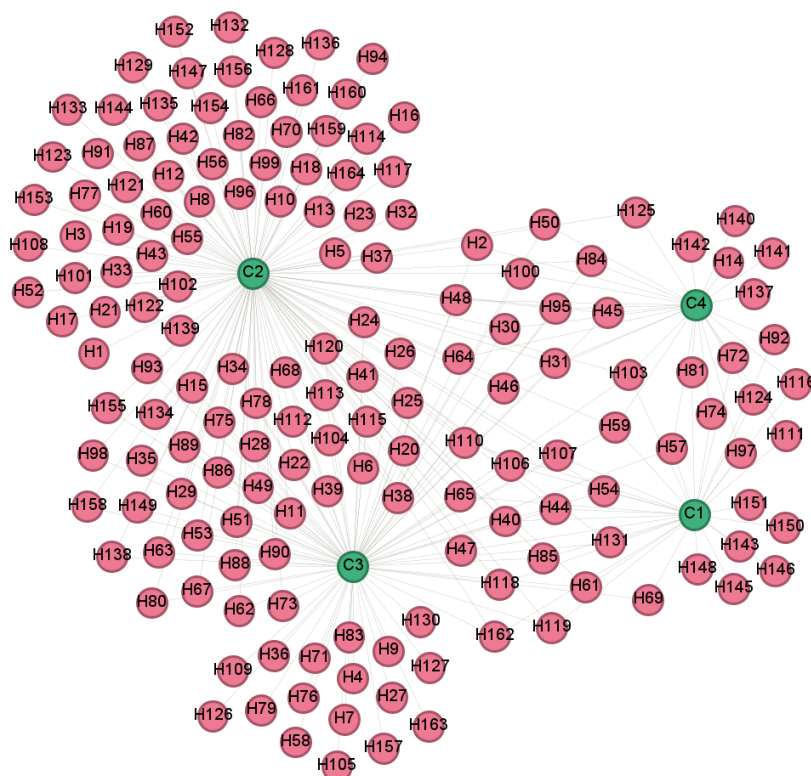


Figure 47 Network between headlines and positive categories

Table 158 Code, Categories and Headlines

Code	Category and Headlines
C1	Inspiring personal stories
C2	Celebrating achievement and records
C3	Highlighting talent development

C4	Leadership and positive presence
H1	Classifieds
H2	I only ask for health for the Games
H3	Twelve years putting Spain on the map.
H4	Happy Birthday and Debut for Bruna Vilamala
H5	Epic comeback and ticket to the Euro
H6	Claudia Fernández makes history
H7	My first coach thought I was right-handed.
H8	Comeback of champions
H9	Praise for the women's team
H10	Spain makes a comeback and qualifies for the 2025 Euro
H11	Llopis shines with a victory in Madrid.
H12	Mireia Benito and David de la Cruz, Spanish Champions
H13	Two more qualifying marks for Paris and another stellar performance by Hugo González.
H14	Trampoline gymnastics is a sensation that is not natural.
H15	Romeu, new coach
H16	The number ones don't fail
H17	Mireia Belmonte moves further away from the Olympics
H18	The star shone less
H19	The list for Czech Republic and Belgium, on Tuesday.
H20	Pere Romeu replaces Giráldez at Barça and signs until 2026
H21	For me, sport is the same as life
H22	La Roja closes the group stage in A Coruña.
H23	Jessica Vall: 'These could be my last Olympic Games'
H24	Spain wants to clear its image
H25	Laura Martínez misses out on the bronze in Paris
H26	A great presentation
H27	A team with a lot of strength
H28	Titmus establishes an unbeaten streak
H29	Tears in front of Macron
H30	The goddess returns to Olympus.
H31	The human side of Ledecky
H32	Champions for the third consecutive year
H33	China claimed its first gold medal in the rifle competition
H34	To seal the pass to the quarterfinals
H35	A solvent Spain does not give options to the hosts
H36	Garrigós opens the medal table for Spain
H37	Laura Martinez is close to glory
H38	Ledecky becomes humanized in the face of Titmus' tyranny

H39	The waterpolo team makes a stunning debut against France
H40	Normal people win
H41	Carolina Marín's spectacular comeback to reach the quarterfinals
H42	Biles enhances her legend with a second gold.
H43	María Pérez and Álvaro Martín bring glory to Spanish race walking
H44	Two medals for those who are no longer here
H45	My priority was medicine.
H46	The queen recovers the throne
H47	Silver and bronze at the Eiffel Tower
H48	The Biles Hurricane
H49	Carolina advances to the quarterfinals with a scare.
H50	The triple crown as the grand finale
H51	Romeu Takes Command
H52	Sorribes and Bucsa, Just Short of the Podium
H53	Biles Makes History Again
H54	María Pérez Issues an Ultimatum to the Federation
H55	Medals with a Lot of Stride
H56	Romeo shows his cards
H57	Carolina Marín: I don't know if I will play again.
H58	Heredia, far from the medals
H59	Paris, cradle of unforgettable Olympic moments
H60	Five gold medals
H61	Improved performance compared to Tokyo, but far from Barcelona
H62	The Women's Tour begins, with Vollering as the favorite.
H63	Sifan Hassan, the complete long-distance runner
H64	A memorable story"
H65	A good plan that failed
H66	The lottery of the horses
H67	Hassan achieves an 'impossible' triple
H68	Champions with a Scare
H69	Real Madrid will always be special.
H70	Bouzas has earned Anabel's call-up.
H71	The talent exodus from Liga F continues
H72	Paris will never forget
H73	Hassan, the Zatopek of Paris
H74	The Paralysis of Olympic Spain
H75	Ewa Pajor scores on her debut
H76	Au revoir singing the 40
H77	Aitana's renewal is underway
H78	Graham shines like gold

H79	USA strikes hard in the Solheim debut.
H80	Keira Walsh stays at Barça... for now.
H81	The irreverent nonconformity of Barça's Alexia and Graham
H82	It was very important to stay here
H83	Spain regains world dominance
H84	An agreement that once again points to Liga F
H85	The MARCA SPORT WEEKEND is back
H86	Against the elements
H87	At the gates of the final
H88	The next-generation board
H89	Barça overturns a controversial goal and puts on a show to the rhythm of Walsh
H90	Luna Rosa leads the Women's America's Cup regatta
H91	The ghosts leave Badosa without a final"
H92	Barça serves up another feast against Madrid CFF in a controversial match.
H93	The aura and football of Alexia once again lead Barça
H94	Win or win against Hammarby
H95	Catalan padel seeks the best of 2024
H96	The nightmare turned into a dream
H97	The innocent look
H98	I hope they kill you
H99	A rival to reset against
H100	European dominance on the first day at Golf Montanyà
H101	Sacrifice in pursuit of the goal
H102	Carolina Marín has been exemplary
H103	A Draw with Lots of Push
H104	The Brave Princess
H105	Shiffrin Goes for 100
H106	Martín-Prieto, Protagonist in Her Debut
H107	Sheila Chepkirui and Abdi Nageeye are crowned
H108	Laura Pérez opens the way
H109	First "major" for Nageeye and Chepkirui
H110	Drama in Women's League 2
H111	Italy takes the women's title
H112	I could have lost my life, and I only lost a leg
H113	Cacereño, the big surprise
H114	Barça and its fantastic month
H115	Into the quarterfinals the fast way
H116	With art in the genes
H117	Peleteiro reports abuse by an ex-partner



H118	Now she follows everything to the letter.
H119	Barcelona thrashes Madrid (5-0) in the Super Cup
H120	Maribel Pérez sets a new milestone
H121	The 'new' Salma asks for the spotlight
H122	Brignone and Von Allmen win in the World Cup
H123	Russia takes control of the Persian Gulf
H124	Peleteiro smiles again
H125	Sandra 'on tour'
H126	From Kinder to leading the Liga Iberdrola
H127	Tomé leaves Jenni Hermoso out again
H128	In the Name of the Father
H129	A 'little hand' of reality
H130	LARA GUT RETURNS TO VICTORY
H131	16-0 and 24-0, two sets that sting
H132	Another 'Real' duel
H133	THE 'REDSTICKS' DRAW WITH ENGLAND IN A FRIENDLY.
H134	SPAIN DOESN'T ALLOW AUSTRALIA TO 'REVENGE' THE OLYMPIC FINAL
H135	Paula Badosa's barrier
H136	The return of the prodigal daughter
H137	MARIANNE VOS JOINS THE BENIDORM WORLD CUP
H138	CAROLINA NAVARRO RETIRES IN 2025
H139	JESSICA BOUZAS: 'IT IS A PRIDE AND A PRIVILEGE TO BE THE NUMBER TWO OF A COUNTRY
H140	The Supercup returns to 'Lega'
H141	Peleteiro reports abuse and sexual assault by her ex-partner
H142	Peleteiro: "And even so, I stayed."
H143	Tomé adds tension to the national team
H144	The new life of Simon Biles
H145	Super Cup for Barça with another thrashing of Madrid
H146	The turning point of women's football
H147	Disorientation and lack of solutions
H148	The prosecutor concludes that Rubiales' kiss was not consensual
H149	Spain is now a world power in ice climbing and dry tooling.
H150	The most essential awards
H151	To complete the procedure in Austria
H152	Peleteiro reports abuse
H153	Leaving Barça was difficult, but I think it was the right decision for growth.
H154	Hugo González, the big favorite
H155	Belmonte wins and Pujol shatters all the records
H156	Practice for the Supercup

H157	Badosa reaches her peak and dreams
H158	Champions with the 'classic' five-goal win
H159	Barça has the best in the world, and it's difficult.
H160	It's the first title of the season and I hope it won't be the last
H161	Laporta is still waiting for Florentino
H162	Barça secures the ticket to the semifinals.
H163	I wanted to normalize the situation with Jenni.
H164	Tomé leaves Hermoso out.
H165	Tomé's Plan B comes into play
H166	Smolkova frustrates Aitana on her way to the belt
H167	Peleteiro dispels the doubts

The network analysis revealed several key elements:

Thematic centrality: The category “Celebrating achievement and records” (C2) emerges as the most central and densely connected node in the network. A large number of headlines are associated with this category, confirming the dominant presence of success-oriented narratives in the portrayal of female athletes.

Relevant clusters: The categories “Highlighting talent development” (C3) and “Inspiring personal stories” (C1) also exhibit significant connectivity. These form notable thematic clusters, often highlighting athletes as role models through personal journeys or long-term commitment to improvement.

Multiple-category headlines: A considerable number of headlines are linked to more than one category, especially between C2 and C3, indicating overlapping narratives that celebrate both performance and progression. This multidimensional framing reflects a richer, more complex portrayal of female athletes.

Less central themes: The category “Leadership and positive presence” (C4), although present, shows lower connectivity compared to the others. It represents a smaller subset of headlines that focus more on symbolic or institutional representation rather than sporting performance.

The network structure shows clear thematic groupings. Nodes are visually organised around central categories, reinforcing the idea that sports headlines tend to reflect consistent and recognisable discursive patterns when covering women in sport.⁶ Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

ES1.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

To explore the relationship between the size of published images and the framing of female athletes, we analysed the 167 articles from the Spanish sample of the POWER project that included visual representations of women in sport. Two key variables were considered:

- *Image size*: coded as an ordinal categorical variable with four categories — less than ¼ of the page, ¼ of the page, half a page, and more than half a page. For analytical purposes, this variable was subsequently grouped into two levels: a) small images (no image or less than ¼ of the page); b) medium/large images (equal to or greater than ¼ of the page)
- *Framing of the athlete in the image*: assessed across two binary dimensions: a) positive (yes/no): presence of visual elements that highlight or celebrate the athlete; b) negative (yes/no): presence of visual elements that diminish, stigmatise, or symbolically penalise the athlete.

To test the association between the variables, cross-tabulations were conducted using Pearson's Chi-square test, likelihood ratio, and Fisher's exact test (to small sample), with a significance level set at 5% ($p < .05$).

Table 159 Image size, positive and negative framing of female athletes

Image size	Positive framing	Numbers of the image	Negative Framing	Numbers of the image
Small (< ¼ page)	Yes	101	Yes	6
Small (< ¼ page)	No	10	No	105
Medium or Large (≥ ¼ page)	Yes	75	Yes	5
Medium or Large (≥ ¼ page)	No	13	No	83
Positive framing	Pearson's chi-square: $\chi^2(1) = 1.081$, $p = .298$ Likelihood ratio: 1.073, $p = 0.300$ Fisher's exact test (2-sided): $p = .265$			
Negative framing	Pearson's chi-square: $\chi^2(1) = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$ Likelihood ratio: 0.000, $p = 1.000$ Fisher's exact test (2-sided): $p = 1.000$			

The results do not show a statistically significant association between image size and the positive framing of female athletes. Although the percentage of positive framing remains high across all image sizes — 91.8% for small images and 85.2% for medium or large ones — the difference is not statistically meaningful (likelihood ratio, $p = .300$; Pearson's chi-square, $p = .298$). This suggests that, in the sample analysed, the size of the image is not a determining factor in whether female athletes are portrayed positively.

This result should, however, be interpreted with caution. Grouping medium and large images into a single category may obscure potential differences: medium-sized images are often

comparable in impact to small ones, whereas large images (half a page or more) can carry greater symbolic weight. The inability to separate these categories due to statistical limitations may have diluted potential contrasts in visual emphasis.

Regarding negative framing, no significant association with image size was found (likelihood ratio, $p = 1.000$; Pearson's chi-square, $p = 1.000$). Negative framing was rare, occurring in only 7 out of 199 images analysed. Of these, 6 corresponded to small images and 1 to a medium-sized image. No large-format images were negatively framed.

Due to the low number of negative cases and the methodological need to group medium and large formats together, the interpretation of trends should be approached with caution. Still, the absence of negative framing in large images may point to an editorial reluctance to visually emphasise female athletes in a negative light. This tentative pattern, however, remains inconclusive given the very limited number of negative examples.

ES1.7. Synthesis of the findings of newspaper's articles

The analysis of Spanish print sports media, conducted within the framework of the POWER project, confirms the persistence of significant gender disparities in representation. Although 77.5% of the 80 editions analysed between June 2024 and February 2025 included at least one mention of female athletes, their presence remains limited, fragmented, and far from equitable. The majority of editions included no more than one article on women in sport, while extensive coverage was overwhelmingly reserved for male athletes. This quantitative gap reflects a structural editorial imbalance, where female visibility is present but not systematic.

A more encouraging aspect is the generally positive tone in which female athletes are portrayed when they do appear. The textual content frequently emphasises achievement, talent development, and inspirational stories, suggesting an effort to construct affirmative narratives. However, gender stereotypes and symbolic devaluation persist in nearly a third of the articles, often in subtle forms such as assumed emotionalism or the trivialisation of sporting performance. These nuances indicate that recognition does not always translate into full respect or equal treatment.

In the visual domain, female athletes are also predominantly framed in a positive light, with editorial choices often aligning with themes of leadership, celebration, and inspiration. However, most images are small in size, and large-format visual prominence remains rare. Statistical analyses revealed no significant association between image size and framing, but the limited number of medium and large images might conceal more nuanced patterns. Importantly, negative portrayals were infrequent and visually underemphasised, suggesting a possible editorial reluctance to reinforce negative representations of women in sport.

The Gephi-based network analysis of article headlines further illustrates the symbolic architecture of positive portrayals. Central categories such as “celebrating achievement” and “highlighting talent development” form the core of this network, with headlines often connected to multiple themes. This multidimensionality enriches the narrative and frames female athletes not only as successful competitors but also as role models and figures of inspiration.

Nevertheless, the overarching picture remains one of structural inequality. Positive framing, while valuable, cannot substitute for proportional visibility. True progress requires not just better representations, but a greater and more consistent inclusion of women in the media’s sporting agenda. Editorial strategies must shift from exceptionalism to normalisation, making female athletes a regular and prominent feature of sports journalism.



ES.2. Online sports magazines analysis

The Spanish sample of online sports publications included two specialised digital platforms: *VAVEL* and *Relevo*. Both outlets are part of the evolving landscape of digital sports journalism, each with its own editorial focus and audience. While *VAVEL* operates through a decentralised model with contributions from a wide range of amateur and semi-professional writers, *Relevo* positions itself as a new-generation sports media project, with a strong emphasis on youth-oriented content and social media engagement. Together, these platforms provide insight into how gender is represented in emerging digital formats within the Spanish sports media ecosystem.

A total of 20 editions were analysed from *VAVEL* and *Relevo*, distributed across ten one-week periods between June 2024 and January 2025. The sampling aimed to ensure balanced temporal coverage and reflect routine publishing activity. This sample provides insight into the visibility and representation of athletes—both male and female—within highly specialised sports journalism contexts in Spain.

ES2.1. Number of analysed articles per Online Sports Magazines

The table below summarises the number of periods collected from each of the two online sports magazines. It reflects the total number of editions analysed per outlet, regardless of gender focus or athlete type:

Table 160 Distribution of the article per online journals

Online Sports Magazine	Number of periods	Percentage
Relevo	10	50%
Vavel	10	50%
Total	20	100%

ES2.2. Period of the data collection

Table 161 present the distribution of the 32 entries analysed from Spanish data. Data were collected between June 2024 and January 2025, offering a temporal snapshot across multiple seasons and editorial cycles. The percentages have been weighted according to the number of editions analysed per month, ensuring a more accurate representation of article frequency relative to editorial output.

Table 161 Distribution of the article per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Percentage	Analysed Editions
Jun/24	3	12.5%	1
Jul/24	5	10.42%	2
Aug/24	5	10.42%	2
Sep/24	2	8.33%	1
Oct/24	4	16.67%	1
Nov/24	4	16.67%	1
Dec/24	3	12.5%	1
Jan/25	3	12.5%	1
Total	32	100%	10

Table 10 shows that the highest proportions of entries were recorded in October and November 2024 (16.67% each), followed by a relatively balanced distribution across the remaining months. Each of the other periods—June, July, August, December, and January—contributed between 10% and 12.5% of the total entries, with the lowest percentage observed in September (8.33%). This temporal distribution, based on ten one-week sampling periods, ensures a representative spread across different editorial cycles and minimises the risk of seasonal bias in the analysis.

ES2.3. Number of articles dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This section compares the number of articles dedicated to male and female athletes per Online Sports Magazine edition. The data were grouped into ranges based on the volume of coverage observed. Notably, 6 editions contained no reference to male athletes, which is particularly relevant when considering the overall gender dynamics.

Table 162 indicates whether each of the 20 analysed editions mentioned female athletes. The variable is dichotomous (yes/no), and the number of editions without any mention is highlighted to assess the extent of female invisibility in online sports media.

Table 162 Mention of female athletes in the newspapers

Does the edition mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	70%
No	6	30%
Total	20	100%

Out of the 20 online editions analysed, 70% (n = 14) included at least one mention of female athletes, while the remaining 30% (n = 6) contained no reference to them at all. Although the majority of editions did feature women to some extent, the data still reveal a notable gap in

representation. The absence of female athletes in nearly one-third of the sample suggests that gender visibility remains inconsistent and is not yet fully integrated into the editorial routines of digital sports media.

Table 163 presents the distribution of article counts dedicated to male and female athletes across the 20 editions.

Table 163 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	0	6
One	0	5
Between 2 and 4	0	5
Between 5 and 8	1	3
More than 8	19	1
Total (valid responses)	20	

For male athletes, 95% of the analysed editions ($n = 19$) featured more than eight articles, while one edition (5%) included between five and eight articles. None of the editions had fewer than five articles about male athletes. These figures confirm the overwhelming dominance of male-focused sports coverage within the sample, with high-volume representation present in nearly every case.

In contrast, coverage of female athletes was considerably lower and more varied. Six editions (30%) included no articles about women, while another five editions (25%) featured only a single article. Five editions (25%) had between two and four articles, and three (15%) included between five and eight articles. Only one edition (5%) exceeded eight articles about female athletes. These results highlight the persistent marginalisation of women in sports journalism, even within digital platforms, where male athletes continue to receive disproportionate attention.

From this sample and in this period, this analysis reinforces the broader finding of systemic underrepresentation of women in Spanish sports journalism. The low frequency and superficial nature of female-focused coverage underscore the persistence of gender bias within both mainstream and niche digital sports

ES2.4. Analysis of female athletes' articles

Out of the full set of observations, only 32 articles were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the Spanish online sports magazines. These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Table 164 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Spain (n = 32)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	17	50%
	Individual sports	16	53.1%
Competitive level of athletes	Olympic	9	28.1%
	Professional	21	70%
	Amateur	1	3.1%
	Grassroots	1	3.1%

Individual sports were slightly more prominent than team sports, appearing in 57.1% of the articles, while team sports accounted for 50%. This minor overlap may result from coding practices or dual mentions, but overall the data suggests a relatively balanced editorial focus between individual and collective disciplines.

Regarding the competitive level, the vast majority of articles focused on professional athletes, who represented 70% of the entries. Olympic-level athletes followed with 28.1%, while amateur and grassroots levels were each represented in just 3.1% of the sample. This strong focus on elite sport reflects a tendency to highlight high-performance contexts when covering female athletes, leaving minimal space for stories involving emerging or community-level participation.

It is important to note that these findings reflect a specific segment of the Spanish digital sports media — in this case, online platforms with a broader or more generalist scope. While not generalisable to the entire media ecosystem, the data points to an editorial preference for covering women in traditionally celebrated sporting contexts, with less emphasis on developmental pathways or non-elite engagement.

ES2.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the text

The analysis of the Spanish sample revealed the presence of several gendered discursive patterns in the representation of female athletes, highlighting important areas of concern. Although the total number of articles featuring women was relatively limited, qualitative scrutiny of the textual content uncovered multiple forms of gender bias.

One of the 32 analysed articles (3.1%) contained explicitly sexist language, indicating the persistence — albeit marginal — of discriminatory discourse. Furthermore, one article was non-sport-related, suggesting the occasional symbolic displacement of women's presence in sports media into peripheral or human-interest narratives rather than sport-specific coverage.

More notably, 25% of the articles ($n = 8$) were found to trivialise the performance of female athletes. Among these, five articles (62.5%) framed the athletes in a sensationalist manner — focusing on emotional intensity or personal drama rather than sporting achievement — while three articles (37.5%) downplayed their accomplishments, reducing the athletic merit or competitive significance of their performance.

Gender stereotypes were present in 12 cases, accounting for over one-third of the analysed texts that featured female athletes. The most common stereotype, appearing in 75% of these cases ($n = 9$), involved assumptions about women's emotionality, such as portraying them as overly sentimental or fragile. Two articles (16.6%) reinforced traditional gender roles, linking the athlete's identity or actions to domestic or nurturing functions. One article (8.3%) attributed the athlete's success to her appearance, rather than to skill or effort — a subtle but problematic form of symbolic devaluation.

Importantly, no instances of sexualisation or objectification were found in the sample. This absence is encouraging and may reflect growing awareness in editorial practices regarding inappropriate visual or textual portrayals. Similarly, no examples of overtly negative framing were identified.

These findings suggest that, while progress has been made in avoiding the most blatant forms of gender discrimination — such as sexualisation or derogatory language — more subtle discursive mechanisms continue to shape the media narrative around female athletes. The prevalence of emotional stereotyping, sensational framing, and the minimisation of athletic performance points to a lingering symbolic inequality in how women's sports are represented. Addressing these patterns is essential to ensuring not only visibility but also dignity and fairness in sports journalism.

ES2.4.2. Negative and positive framing in the text

In the Spanish sample, 6 out of 32 articles (18.75%) exhibited negative framing of female athletes. Most of these focused on failure (83.3%), while one emphasised injury (16.6%). Although limited in number, these cases reflect a tendency to associate female athletes with narratives of underperformance or vulnerability, rather than success.

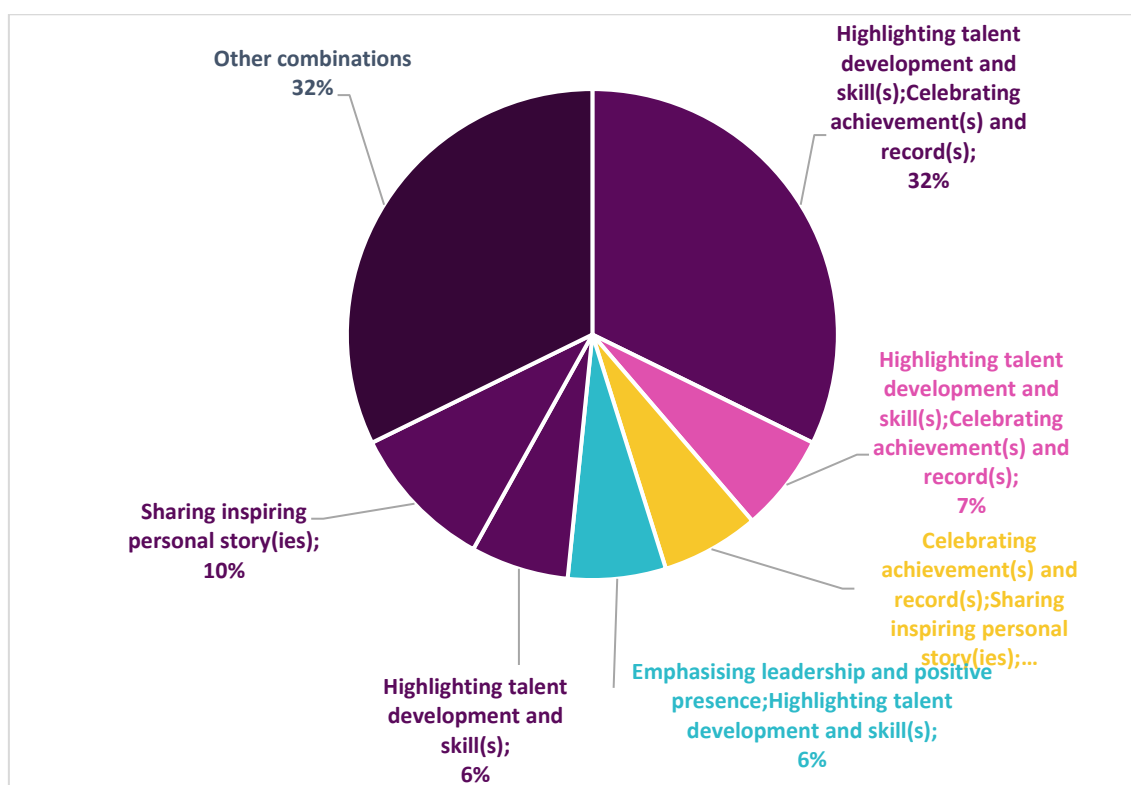


Figure 48 Categorisation of positive framing text

All 32 articles in the Spanish sample (100%) portrayed female athletes positively. The most prevalent frames were highlighting talent development (70%) and celebrating achievements (59.4%), followed by inspiring personal stories (40.6%) and leadership or positive presence (18.75%). These results suggest a tendency to associate women's visibility in sports media with outstanding performance or inspiring qualities. While the tone is broadly affirmative, this emphasis on merit and exceptionalism may reinforce the idea that women must demonstrate extraordinary value to be featured.

ES2.5. Presence and number of images in the articles

ES2.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the images

Among the 30 analysed articles featuring images of female athletes, 1 case (3%) showed trivialisation of performance. Gender stereotypes appeared in 7 articles (23.3%), most commonly through assumed emotionalism (85.7%), with one instance linking women's roles as secondary to men (14.3%). No cases of sexualisation were identified. Negative framing occurred in only one article (3%), focused on failure. Conversely, 29 articles (96.6%) demonstrated positive framing, primarily through highlighting talent development (69%) and celebrating achievements (44.8%), with additional references to leadership (27.6%) and inspiring personal

stories (10.3%). These results suggest a predominantly affirmative portrayal of female athletes, though often tied to specific forms of excellence or symbolic value.

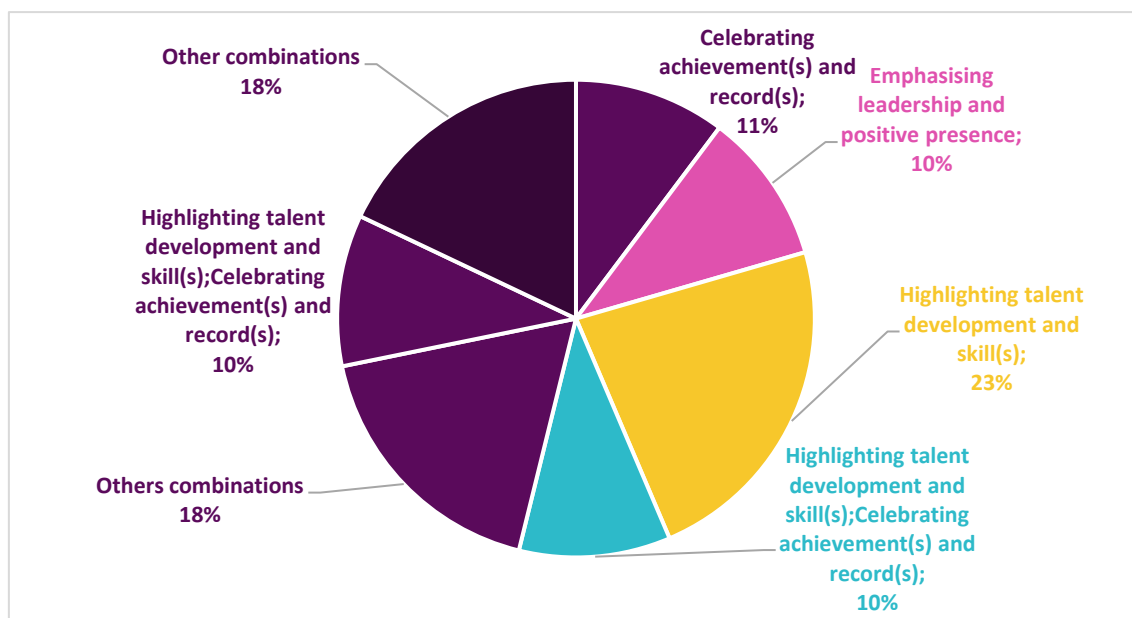


Figure 49 Categorisation of positive framing images

These visual representations are consistent with the patterns observed in the textual content, reinforcing positive symbolic attributes such as leadership, competence, and personal achievement. Although the sample is small, the data suggest a favourable editorial trend when female athletes are visually featured.

ES2.6. Analysis of the relationship between image size and the framing of female athletes

In our case, it was not possible to analyse the relationship between image size and the positive framing of female athletes. The sample of online sports magazines we examined follows a fixed web layout where image size is pre-defined by the template or content management system, and does not vary in a meaningful way between articles.

Unlike traditional print or newspaper formats — where image size can reflect editorial emphasis — the standardised format used in our sample means that the size of images is not a reliable indicator of editorial intent or importance. Slight variations may occur due to technical formatting, but they do not correspond to consistent differences in framing.

Although this limitation prevented us from conducting a comparative analysis as seen in other studies, this observation is itself relevant. It highlights how the design constraints of digital publication formats can shape or restrict the ways in which visual emphasis is communicated, and raises questions about how editorial priorities are signalled in online media environments.

ES2.7. Synthesis of the findings of online sports magazines

The analysis of Spanish online sports magazines confirms the persistent underrepresentation of female athletes in digital sports journalism. Despite analysing 20 editions from *Relevo* and *VAVEL*, only 70% included any mention of women, and coverage was generally limited in volume and depth.

While overtly sexist content and sexualisation were rare, 25% of the articles trivialised female performance and nearly a quarter reproduced gender stereotypes, mostly through assumed emotionalism. Negative framing was observed in 18.8% of cases, typically focusing on failure or injury, while positive framing appeared in nearly all cases, especially highlighting achievements and talent.

Visual content followed a similar trend, with a strong presence of positive framing (96.6%) and no instances of sexualisation. However, subtle stereotypes remained present in a minority of images.

These findings suggest that, **although explicit bias is limited, women's presence in online sports media remains constrained and conditional, often linked to exceptional performance. Addressing this imbalance will require not only respectful framing, but also a broader and more regular inclusion of female athletes in the digital sports agenda.**

ES3. Social media: X profiles analysis

This section analyses the presence and representation of female athletes in posts published on Spanish profiles on the platform X (formerly Twitter), within the framework of the POWER project. This stage seeks to understand how institutional and individual profiles within the sports sector contribute (or not) to the visibility of women in the digital space, with particular focus on X, one of the most widely used social media platforms by federations, clubs, journalists, and athletes for the dissemination of real-time sports content.

The analysis focuses on a single day randomly selected between June 2024 and February 2025, allowing for a punctual yet revealing examination of gender dynamics within the posts. Data collection followed a common protocol established by the POWER project, considering Spanish profiles with relevant activity on the platform. Two institutional media profiles with a high number of followers (between 400.000 and 2.1 million) were analysed: one specialising in sport (*DAZN España*) and the other a generalist (*EFE Noticias*).

ES3.1. Number of analysed posts per X profile

Table 165 presents the distribution of the 55 analysed posts in the Spanish case study, according to the institutional X (formerly Twitter) profile from which they originated. Two high-follower national profiles were included: *DANZ España*, a sports-specialised outlet, and *EFE Noticias*, a generalist news agency.

Table 165 Distribution of the article per journals

Newspaper	Is this a sports specialised newspaper?	Number of the articles	Percentage
DAZN España	Yes	35	63,6%
EFE Noticias	No	20	26,3%
Total		55	100%

The sample includes a relatively balanced number of posts from both profiles, enabling a comparative analysis between a sport-focused and a general news outlet. DAZN España, as a sport-dedicated platform, represents most posts (63.6%), which may reflect its consistent output of sports-related content. However, the significant inclusion of EFE Noticias allows for an assessment of how women's sports are represented outside specialised contexts.

ES3.2. Period of the data collection

Table 166 presents the distribution of the 55 articles by their month of publication. Data were collected from June 2024 to February 2025, allowing observation of potential seasonal or

contextual variations. To ensure comparability across months, a weighted percentage was calculated.

Table 166 Distribution of the article per data collection period

Month	Frequency	Analysed days	Percentage
June/24	4	4	5,8%
July/24	10	3	19,4%
August/24	11	3	21,4%
September/24	2	3	3,9%
October/24	5	4	7,3%
November/24	8	3	15,5%
December/24	2	3	3,9%
January/25	5	4	7,3%
February/25	8	3	15,5%
Total	55	30	100%

Although the number of analysed days per month is relatively even (3–4 days), the distribution of posts reveals marked differences in publication density. July and August 2024 register the highest concentration of content, likely linked to the Olympic Games. November 2024 and February 2025 also show increased activity. These variations suggest that the visibility of women athletes fluctuates significantly across the year, depending more on editorial and sporting agendas than on the temporal scope of the analysis.

Table 167 shows the distribution of the 55 articles according to the day of the week they were published, helping identify editorial patterns across the week. To ensure comparability across months, a weighted percentage was calculated.

Table 167 Distribution of the article per data collection weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Analysed days	Percentage
Monday	8	4	15.3%
Tuesday	10	5	15.3%
Wednesday	4	4	7.7%
Thursday	5	4	9.6%
Friday	4	5	6.1%
Saturday	14	4	26.8%
Sunday	10	4	19.2%
Total	55	30	100%

When adjusted for the number of analysed days, Saturday remains the most prominent day for women's sports coverage, accounting for over 26% of the total. Sunday and Tuesday also show relatively high frequencies. In contrast, Wednesday and Friday appear underrepresented. These

differences may reflect editorial priorities, with increased attention to women's sports during weekends and on days of higher general sports activity.

ES3.3. Number of X posts dedicated to male vs. female athletes

This analysis assesses the presence of women athletes in the daily production of posts on platform X. Rather than counting individual posts, it considers whether each profile published at least one post mentioning female athletes on each analysed day. Since two media profiles were studied across 30 days, the total number of observations is 60.

Out of these 60 cases, women's sports were mentioned in only 24 (40%), while in 36 cases (60%) there was no reference to female athletes at all (see Table 168).

This binary variable (yes/no) helps evaluate the consistency of visibility for women athletes across editorial routines. The predominance of cases with zero mentions (60%) illustrates the persistent invisibility of women in everyday sports coverage, despite the growing presence of female athletes in the sporting world.

Table 168 Mention of female athletes in the X posts

Does the X posts mention female athletes?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	24	40%
No	36	60%
Total	60	100%

Table 169 Article's numbers dedicated to male and female's athletes

Number of articles	Male athletes	Female athletes
None	7	36
One	6	11
Between 2 and 4	12	8
Between 5 and 8	4	3
More than 8	31	2

In the Spanish case study, a total of 60 posts published on platform X were analysed, corresponding to two media profiles across 30 different days. Most of these posts referred predominantly to male athletes. Specifically, 31 posts (51.7%) included more than eight mentions of male athletes, and an additional 10 posts (16.7%) contained between five and eight mentions. Another 12 posts (20%) referred to between two and four male athletes. In contrast, only 13 posts (21.6%) included little or no reference to male athletes — specifically, 6 posts (10%) mentioned just one male athlete, and 7 posts (11.6%) did not mention any male athlete

at all. These figures suggest that more than two-thirds of the content (68.4%) focused heavily on male athletes.

Female athletes, in contrast, were completely absent in 36 out of the 60 posts (60%). When present, their representation was generally limited: 11 posts (18.3%) included a single mention of a female athlete, and 8 posts (13.3%) referred to between two and four female athletes. Only 3 posts (5%) included between five and eight mentions, and just 2 posts (3.3%) exceeded eight mentions. These numbers reflect the marginal position of women in the analysed content, with most posts offering either no visibility or minimal inclusion of female athletes.

ES3.4. Analysis of female athletes' X posts

Out of the full set of observations, 55 posts were identified that included a mention of female athletes across the X posts from Spanish profiles (i.e., DAZN España and EFE Noticias). These entries serve as the basis for a more detailed analysis of how female athletes are represented in this segment of the sports media. The characteristics analysed include the type of sport involved and the competitive level of the female athletes featured.

Table 170 Characteristics of articles featuring female athletes in Spain (n = 55)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Type of sport featured	Team sports	34	61.8%
	Individual sports	21	38.2%
Competitive level of athletes	Amateur	2	3.6%
	Grassroots	1	1.8%
	Professional	33	60%
	Olympic	19	34.5%

Team sports were more prominently featured than individual sports, appearing in 61.8% of the analysed posts, compared to 38.2% for individual disciplines. In terms of competitive level, most posts referred to professional athletes (60%), followed by Olympic-level content (34.5%). Amateur and grassroots levels were marginal, with only 3.6% and 1.8% respectively.

It is important to note that these results refer specifically to the current sample of X posts from the Spanish media profiles DAZN España (sports-specialised) and EFE Noticias (generalist). While the findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of Spanish sports media, they align with patterns highlighted in previous research: a tendency to prioritise elite-level competition and to marginalise female athletes, especially outside high-profile events or in disciplines perceived as less commercially valuable.

ES3.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X posts

As previously mentioned, data collection in Spain identified 55 X posts that included references to female athletes. The textual analysis of these posts revealed 5 cases (9.1%) containing sexist language or gender-based derogatory expressions. Additionally, 7 posts (12.7%) trivialised women athletes' performance, 12 posts (21.8%) conveyed gender stereotypes, and 1 post (1.8%) framed a female athlete in a clearly negative light. These types of narratives, although not the majority, reinforce outdated perceptions and merit critical scrutiny within broader editorial practices.

It is worth noting that no cases of sexualisation or objectification were found in the posts analysed. This absence may reflect a positive evolution in how female athletes are represented on digital platforms. However, caution is warranted when interpreting this trend, as the sample remains relatively limited.

In contrast, the vast majority of posts — 51 out of 55 (92.7%) — included positive portrayals of women athletes (see Figure 50). These representations emphasised sporting achievements, highlighted talent and skill, celebrated leadership roles, and shared inspiring personal stories. Such narratives suggest an increasing tendency to recognise and value female athletes — provided they are made visible — within the digital sports media landscape.

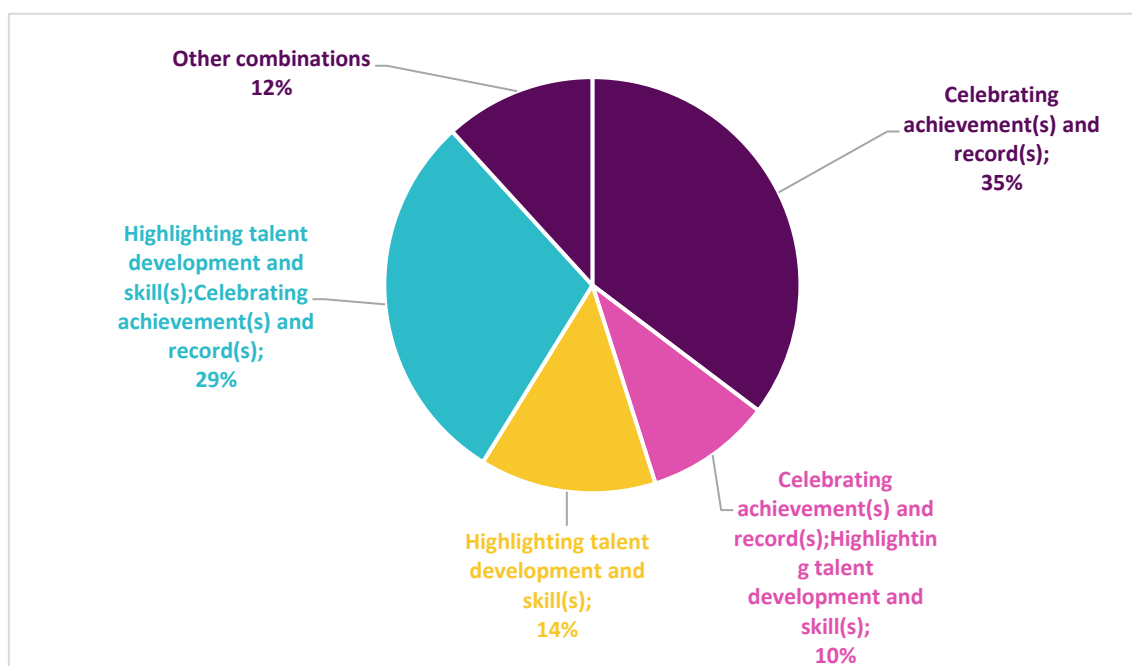


Figure 50 Categorisation of positive framing text

Although these findings cannot be generalised to the entirety of the Spanish sports media landscape, they provide an indicative picture of how female athletes are represented in the analysed X profiles. The low incidence of negative stereotypes or objectification, combined with the frequency of positive portrayals, may serve as an important indicator.

ES3.5. Presence and number of images in the X posts

Of the 55 X posts that mentioned female athletes in the Spanish case study, all were analysed for the presence of images. The data show that 49 posts (89.1%) included at least one image of the mentioned athlete(s), while 6 posts (10.9%) did not feature any visual content.

This pattern suggests that, although the vast majority of posts provided some degree of visual representation, a non-negligible share still failed to include imagery — potentially limiting the visibility and emotional impact of female athletes on social media. The presence of images is particularly relevant for reinforcing the representation of women in sport, especially on platforms like X, where visual content plays a central role in reach and audience engagement.

It is important to note that these findings are based on a limited sample of Spanish media profiles and should not be generalised to the entire digital sports media landscape.

ES3.5.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes in the X post's images

Among the 49 X posts with images mentioning female athletes, 2 cases (4.1%) showed signs of trivialising performance, and 1 case (2%) conveyed gender stereotypes through visual representation. While these instances were relatively rare, they indicate that gendered framings can still appear in visual content, even when overt sexualisation or objectification is absent.

Importantly, no images presented female athletes in a negative context, such as punishment, failure, or disciplinary framing. This suggests a tendency towards neutral or respectful visual portrayals in the analysed sample.

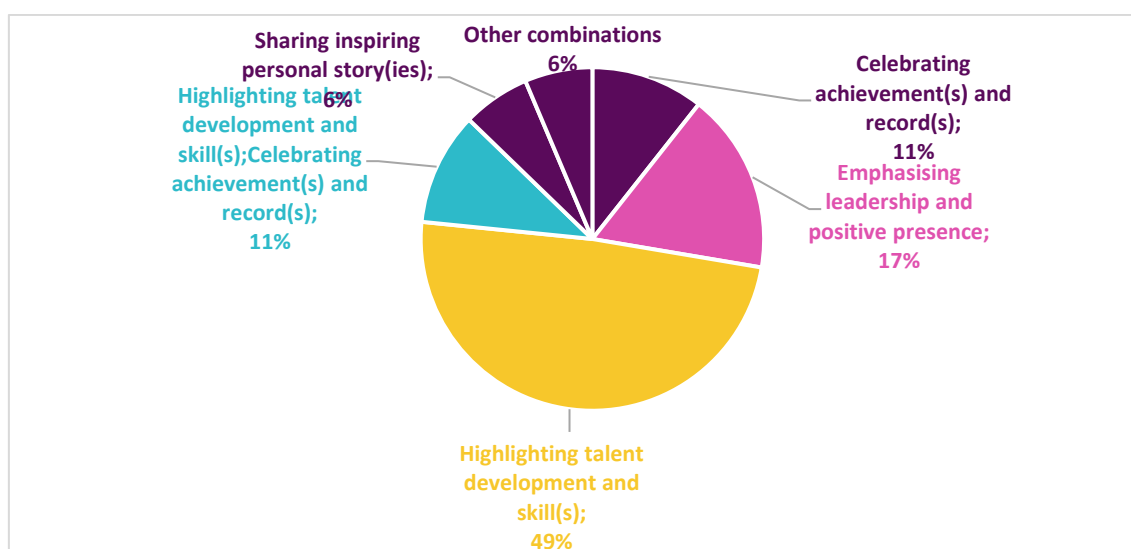


Figure 51 Categorisation of positive framing images

On the other hand, 47 out of 49 posts (95.9%) visually framed the athletes in a positive light, reinforcing symbolic traits such as merit, leadership, perseverance, or inspiration. Although the

sample is limited, the absence of overtly sexist representations and the prevalence of affirmative visual narratives may point to a more respectful and constructive approach in the digital sports coverage examined.

ES3.6. Synthesis of the findings of X posts

The analysis of Spanish profiles on platform X, within the framework of the POWER project, provides relevant insights into the digital visibility and representation of female athletes. The results point to a clear gender imbalance, with only 40% of the analysed cases including any mention of women's sport, and 60% showing no reference to female athletes at all. Even when women are present, their visibility tends to be limited: most posts contain only one or a few mentions, and extensive coverage remains rare. By contrast, male athletes dominate the content, with over two-thirds of the posts focusing heavily on them.

This imbalance persists despite the fact that the sample includes two high-profile media outlets — DAZN España (sport-specialised) and EFE Noticias (generalist) — suggesting that the underrepresentation of female athletes is not limited to general media, but also extends to platforms fully dedicated to sports.

Nevertheless, when women athletes are included, the tone and framing are largely positive. In the 55 posts analysed, sexist language was detected in a small portion (9.1%), while gender stereotypes (21.8%) and trivialisation (12.7%) were more common, though still not dominant. Importantly, 92.7% of the posts featured positive portrayals, highlighting talent, leadership, achievement, and inspiration.

This trend is also reflected in the visual content: 89.1% of the posts included images of female athletes, and 95.9% of these images framed them in a positive light. Only isolated cases revealed trivialisation or stereotyped representation, and no examples of sexualisation, objectification or negative framing were identified. These findings may signal a shift towards more respectful visual narratives in digital sports media, at least in this limited sample.

As with the Spanish case, however, these results must be interpreted with caution. The sample size is small (N = 55), the timeframe limited (30 days), and the analysis includes only two institutional profiles. While the findings offer valuable descriptive insights, they are not sufficient to support broad generalisations or inferential analysis.

Overall, the data suggest that female athletes remain significantly underrepresented in Spanish digital sports media, even on platforms such as X that, in theory, facilitate faster and more inclusive communication. That said, the quality of representation — when it occurs — appears to be improving, both in textual and visual terms. Further research with larger and more diverse samples (including profiles of athletes, clubs, and federations) is needed to better understand the dynamics of gender visibility and to foster a more equitable representation of women in sport.

ES4. Online TV episode analysis

This analysis refers to the Spanish sample of online TV episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025, within the framework of the POWER project. The study examined the visibility and framing of female athletes in sports-related news segments broadcast by national TV channels.

ES4.1. Number of analysed episodes per TV channel

Table 171 presents the distribution of the 40 analysed episodes according to the TV channel of origin. The sample includes editions from two widely circulated national public broadcasters: Televisión Española (TVE) and TV3. Both are generalist channels with regular sports coverage in their news bulletins.

Table 171 Distribution of the episodes per channel

TV Station	Number of Episodes	Percentage
TVE	20	50%
TV3	20	50%

The sample is balanced across both channels, allowing a comparative analysis.

ES4.2. Period of Data Collection

Table 172 presents the distribution of the 40 analysed episodes by their month of broadcast. These episodes span from June 2024 to February 2025, covering various seasons and news cycles. Out of the total, 33 episodes contained at least one relevant report, which were included in the coding process.

Table 172 Distribution of the episodes by month

Month	Frequency	Analysed days	Percentage
June/24	4	2	14.1%
July/24	2	2	7.1%
August/24	4	2	14.1%
September/24	6	2	21.2%
October/24	4	3	9.4%
November/24	6	2	14.4%
December/24	3	2	10.6%
January/25	4	3	9.4%
February/25	0	2	0%

Total	33	20	100%
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To ensure temporal comparability, the sample was balanced by number of analysed days per month (2 or 3 days), allowing for a fair distribution across the observation period. When adjusted accordingly, September 2024 shows the highest concentration of coded reports (21.2%), followed by August, November, and June 2024 (all above 14%). In contrast, February 2025 yielded no relevant reports, despite being included in the sampling.

This distribution reflects both the variability of editorial output and the effects of seasonal or event-driven factors on sports news content.

ES4.3. Distribution by weekday

Table 173 shows the distribution of episodes according to the weekday they were aired. This allows for the identification of editorial routines or trends linked to specific days.

Table 173 Distribution of the episodes by weekday

Day of the Week	Frequency	Analysed days	Percentage
Monday	5	3	14.3%
Tuesday	3	3	8.6%
Wednesday	8	3	22.9%
Thursday	4	3	11.4%
Friday	2	3	5.7%
Saturday	7	3	20%
Sunday	4	2	17.1%
Total	33	20	100%

To ensure comparability, a balanced percentage was calculated by considering the number of episodes per analysed day. The results reveal that Wednesday (22.9%) and Saturday (20%) stand out as the days with the highest concentration of coded episodes, suggesting a possible editorial emphasis or greater availability of sports content midweek and during weekends.

By contrast, Friday (5.7%) and Tuesday (8.6%) show notably lower activity. Overall, however, the distribution remains relatively even across the week, indicating a consistent flow of sports news without a dominant focus on any single day.

ES4.4. Analysis of female athletes' TV reports

Out of the entire sample, 24 of the 40 episodes analysed included at least one news item about a female athlete or women's team (33 reports in total). These reports form the basis for a more detailed analysis, focusing on the specific characteristics of how women are represented in televised sports news.

Table 174 Characteristics of reports featuring female athletes

Variable	Category	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Is the report sport-related?	Yes	30	81%
	No	3	9%
Type of sport featured	Team sport	22	66,6%
	Individual	9	27,3%
	Mixed team	5	15,2%
Competitive level of athletes	Professional	24	72,7%
	Olympic	5	15,2%
	Amateur	4	12,1

Out of the 33 episodes analysed, 91% included sport-related reports, although 9% still featured no sport content at all — a striking absence considering the context of sports news programmes. The majority of reports focused on team sports (66.6%), especially football, though individual sports (27.3%) and mixed teams (15.2%) were also represented to a lesser extent. Most of the featured athletes competed at the professional level (72.7%), with very limited attention given to Olympic athletes (15.2%) and almost no coverage of amateur sports (12.1%). This lack of visibility for non-professional levels highlights a significant imbalance in the representation of the broader sports landscape..

ES4.4.1. Sexist language and gender stereotypes

Out of the 33 reports analysed, only one included sexist language, and just two contained gender stereotypes — both of which framed female athletes through assumed emotionalism. Importantly, none of the reports trivialised athletic performance or included sexualised or objectifying imagery, suggesting a generally respectful editorial approach.

In terms of tone, only 3 reports (9.1%) presented a negative framing: two focused on failure and one emphasised injuries. By contrast, 32 of the 33 reports (97%) portrayed female athletes in a positive light, mostly by celebrating sporting achievements (65.6%), highlighting their talent (43.75%), or visualising leadership (9.4%). A smaller number (6.25%) featured inspirational stories.

While the overall representation is overwhelmingly positive, it is still important to note the persistence of certain gender biases and occasional sexist commentary, which point to areas where further progress is needed.

ES4.4.2 Gender presence and airtime in TV sports reporting

Out of the 40 analysed episodes:

- 38 episodes (95%) featured at least one report on male athletes;

- 33 episodes (82,5%) mentioned female athletes;

Across all episodes, the total estimated airtime for female athletes was just 16 minutes.

This reflects a significant imbalance in both presence and editorial weight. While men were featured in nearly all episodes, women appeared in 82.5% of them, but with considerably less airtime and fewer news items.

The cumulative 16 minutes dedicated to women's sport — across all months and broadcasters — highlights just how limited their visibility remains in the public sphere of televised news.

ES4.5. Synthesis of the findings of TV episodes

The analysis of Spanish online television episodes coded between June 2024 and February 2025 reveals ongoing imbalances in the visibility and editorial framing of female athletes in sports news. Out of the 40 episodes analysed, 33 (82.5%) included at least one report on a female athlete or women's team. This suggests a notable, though not yet equal, presence within the general sports news agenda.

However, the total airtime dedicated to women's sports was just 16 minutes across all months and broadcasters — a strikingly low figure when contrasted with the overall volume of sports coverage. While women were present in a majority of episodes, their visibility in terms of duration and number of reports remained significantly lower than that of male athletes, who featured in 95% of episodes. Furthermore, amateur and grassroots sports received minimal attention, with most reports focusing on professional-level competition.

In terms of content, the qualitative framing of female athletes was predominantly positive. Out of 33 reports, only one included sexist language, and two showed gender stereotyping, both through emotional framing. No instances of trivialisation, sexualisation, or objectifying visuals were recorded. A large majority of reports (97%) celebrated the achievements (65.6%) or talent (43.75%) of female athletes, while fewer focused on leadership (9.4%) or inspirational narratives (6.25%).

Despite the absence of overtly discriminatory coverage, the framing remained largely restricted to performance-related aspects, with little space given to broader social contributions or personal stories. This indicates that while progress has been made in avoiding stereotypical portrayals, subtler forms of gender bias persist in the structure and editorial logic of sports news reporting.

In conclusion, the findings suggest that although female athletes are increasingly included in sports media, inequalities remain in terms of visibility, depth, and diversity of representation. Moving toward more equitable coverage requires not only increasing the volume of stories about women, but also expanding the types of narratives through which their presence in sport is communicated.



ES.5. Focus Group analysis

ES5.1. Details of the organised focus group

Date: 28/4/2025

Place: Online- Zoom meeting

Objective: Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media, discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media

Number of participants: 10

Profile of participants: see the table below

Table 175 Focus Group Participants – Profile Summary

Code	Gender	Professional Affiliation	Role /	Relevant Background	Inclusion Category
P1	Male	Journalist		Graduate in Journalism, specialized in Sports Journalism.	Journalist
P2	Male	Journalist		Degree in Journalism and Sports Communication, with experience in media and press.	Journalist
P3	Female	Technical Coordinator		Graduate in Sport Sciences.	Media professional
P4	Female	Head of Communications	of	Head of Communication, writes cultural press articles with a gender perspective.	Media professional
P5	Female	Hockey player and content creator	and	First Division field hockey player.	Content creator
P6	Female	Soccer player and referee	and	Football referee (Spanish Federation) – Women's First	Female athlete

			Division and Men's Third Division. Law graduate with a Master's in Legal Practice.	
P7	Female	Amateur climber	First Division field hockey player.	Female athlete
P8	Male	Communications Manager	Head of Communication and Press.	Additional stakeholder
P9	Female	Project Coordinator	Head of Communication, writes cultural press articles with a gender perspective.	Additional stakeholder
P10	Female	Equality Officer	Head of Communication, writes cultural press articles with a gender perspective.	Additional stakeholder

ES5.2. Thematic analysis

Table 176 Thematic analysis from Spanish

Category: Inequality in Media Coverage		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Unequal coverage between men's and women's sports	Participants agree that women's sports receive significantly less media coverage. Even when content is similar (e.g., match reports), there is a lack of in-depth articles or analysis from a gender perspective. Men's teams get more coverage simply due to their larger presence in sport.	P1, P3, P4, P9, P10
Focus on male-dominated sports and invisibility of others	Women's football gets some visibility, but other female sports remain underrepresented, especially individual or minority sports. The logic of coverage is based on volume, not merit.	P1, P3, P6, P7, P9
Media logic reinforces existing participation gaps	The media reproduces the traditional male dominance in sports. As men are more represented in sport, they also generate more content, reinforcing the cycle of visibility and participation.	P1, P9, P10
Coverage of women still depends on results or spectacle	Female athletes only receive attention when winning major competitions or filling stadiums. Visibility often relies on exceptional results or events.	P1, P9
Women's stories framed through emotional or personal angles	Coverage of female athletes often emphasizes emotional stories, personal background or aesthetics over performance, due to the perception that this content is more appealing to a broad audience.	P1, P3, P5, P7, P9
Category: Stereotypes and Sexualization		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Sexist framing & magnification of mistakes	Women's errors are amplified and framed sensationally in sports news, especially in the rising women's football scene, placing them under disproportionate scrutiny.	P1, P4, P6, P8

Aesthetic pressure & enduring stereotypes	Coverage still spotlights looks, uniforms, or camera angles, reinforcing gendered stereotypes — even if more subtly than decades ago.	P3, P7, P9, P10
Persistence of sexualization in storytelling	High-profile cases (e.g., Serena Williams, Simone Biles) show that media often foreground appearance despite sporting success, proving sexualization has not disappeared.	P4, P7, P9, P10
Shift toward less overt sexualization	Some participants note a decline in blatant sexualization compared with 50 years ago, yet subtle forms remain commonplace.	P7, P9
Category: Lack of Focus on Performance		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Media prioritise personal/emotional content	Media often emphasise emotional narratives or personal stories over sporting achievements, assuming that these attract broader audiences.	P1, P5, P7, P9
Media logic: performance doesn't sell	Some participants suggest that performance alone is not considered marketable, especially in women's sports. Emotional stories are seen as more 'sellable'.	P7, P9
Gender bias diminishes sporting merit	Female achievements are routinely overshadowed by personal trivia, sustaining stereotypes and the perception that women compete in a "second tier."	P3, P10
Category: Impact on athletes' careers		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Heightened scrutiny alongside new visibility	As women's sport gains airtime, every mistake is "put under the microscope"; the same exposure that helps careers also brings harsher public and media criticism.	P6, P4, P8
Media exposure unlocks sponsorship & funding	Greater coverage attracts sponsors and resources, creating a virtuous circle of visibility → funding → further visibility.	P9
Role-model effect widens the talent pipeline	Seeing female athletes regularly in the media normalises women's sport, inspires girls to take part and ultimately strengthens future elite ranks.	P3, P4, P7
Category: Sexist and gendered stereotypes		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants

Implicit sexualisation in images & language	Photos, camera angles, uniforms and off-hand comments still sexualise female athletes. Although less blatant than decades ago, the focus on looks reinforces gendered expectations and keeps performance in the background.	P3, P4, P7, P9, P10
Sexualised visibility becomes the “model” for young athletes	Even highly successful athletes are often judged through an aesthetic lens, which diminishes the value of their sporting achievements and young athletes learn that looks are the quickest route to attention, undermining sporting values.	P4, P7, P9, P10
Male-dominated newsrooms shape content & tone	The prevalence of male editors and newsroom leaders steers story selection and framing through a male gaze, sustaining sexist angles unless proactive equality policies are adopted.	P1, P4, P5
Category: Need for Change		
Subcategories	Thematic analysis	Participants
Need for communication training and awareness	Participants call for specific training for both journalists and athletes to foster strategic, conscious and gender-aware communication.	P3, P5, P6, P10
Positive visibility as a driver of participation	Greater visibility of female athletes not only increases public awareness but also inspires new generations and attracts sponsorship.	P3, P4, P7, P9
Promoting diverse and inclusive representations	It is important to represent a wide range of women, going beyond star athletes and showing different sports, stories and roles in the sports ecosystem.	P4, P6, P10
Examples of best practices and success stories	Successful cases such as the growth of Barça Femení or visibility in Paralympic sport show how media coverage can transform perception and participation.	P4, P7, P9
Structural change through policy and long-term plans	Participants stress that without equality plans, protocols and sustained efforts (quotas, funding, editorial lines), no real change will happen.	P1, P5, P9, P10

Category 1: Inequality in Media Coverage

The participants widely agreed that women's sports receive significantly less media coverage than men's, not only in terms of volume but also in terms of depth and focus. Even when news content is similar coverage lacks contextualisation or gender perspective. The media prioritise male-dominated sports like football, while other female disciplines remain invisible, especially individual or minority sports. This imbalance is often justified through the logic of audience numbers or commercial interest, which in turn reinforces existing gender gaps in participation and visibility. Additionally, coverage of female athletes often depends on exceptional success or spectacle, rather than consistent performance. When women are featured, the emphasis tends to fall on emotional or aesthetic narratives, rather than their athletic achievements.

Implication: This imbalance contributes to the structural invisibility of women in sport. The lack of sustained and performance-based representation weakens their perceived legitimacy and limits opportunities for recognition, sponsorship and role-modelling. As long as media narratives remain shaped by volume logic and gendered assumptions, the growth of women's sport will continue to face major structural barriers.

Category 2: Stereotypes and Sexualisation

Participants highlighted the ongoing presence of gendered portrayals in sports media. Women athletes are often judged through an aesthetic or emotional lens, with mistakes exaggerated and appearance prioritised over performance. Despite progress, sexualisation persists in more subtle ways, and even elite athletes like Serena Williams or Simone Biles are framed through their looks rather than their achievements.

Implication: These persistent stereotypes limit the credibility and recognition of female athletes, placing the focus on how they look rather than what they achieve. This not only reinforces outdated gender roles in sport but also sends problematic messages to audiences — particularly younger girls — about what matters in women's sporting success.

Category 3: Lack of Focus on Performance

Participants noted that media coverage of female athletes often prioritises emotional narratives or personal stories over athletic performance. This tendency reflects the belief that sport performance alone is not marketable in women's sports. As a result, female achievements are frequently overshadowed by personal anecdotes, reinforcing stereotypes and the idea that women's sport belongs to a second tier.

Implication: By sidelining performance, media coverage weakens the sporting credibility of female athletes and sustains unequal perceptions of merit. This limits the visibility of talent and undermines efforts to build parity between men's and women's professional recognition.

Category 4: Impact on Athletes' Careers

Participants highlighted how media visibility directly influences the careers of women athletes. While exposure can attract sponsorship and funding, it also brings increased scrutiny, with

female athletes often judged more harshly. Regular media presence was also seen as crucial to inspiring the next generation and creating long-term opportunities in sport.

Implication: Limited or biased visibility not only affects public perception but also impacts financial support, career progression and the sustainability of women's sport. Ensuring fair coverage is essential for building inclusive pathways to success.

Category 5: Sexist and Gendered Stereotypes

Participants pointed out that female athletes are still often portrayed through a sexist lens. Even when not explicit, sexualisation persists through images, camera angles or language that emphasise appearance. This reinforces aesthetic expectations and teaches young athletes that visibility depends on looks. The lack of women in editorial leadership was also seen as a factor shaping biased coverage.

Implication: These representations reduce the legitimacy of women's sport and reproduce gender inequality in public discourse. Addressing them requires structural change in newsrooms and conscious efforts to shift how women are portrayed across all media formats.

Category 6: Need for Change in Representation

Participants expressed a shared demand for structural and cultural transformation in sports media. They called for communication training, long-term equality plans, and more inclusive narratives that go beyond elite athletes. Visibility was seen not only as a matter of justice, but also as key to increasing participation, funding, and public support for women's sport.

Implication: To achieve gender equity in sport, media institutions must commit to sustained change—through policy, representation and storytelling. Supporting diverse voices and making women's achievements visible is essential for reshaping public perception and fostering future growth.

ES5.4. Word cloud analysis

To complement the thematic analysis, we created a word cloud based on the frequency of terms mentioned across participants' contributions in the focus group. Proper names, prepositions, and adverbs were excluded to focus only on meaningful content words. The final list was refined to include only terms that aligned with the six thematic categories established in our analytical framework. This visual representation offers an intuitive overview of the key ideas and concerns discussed, with the most frequently mentioned terms appearing in larger font sizes.



Figure 52 Word cloud from the thematic analysis

Synthesis of the findings - SPAIN

The cross-format analysis **conducted in Spain confirms a persistent under-representation of female athletes in the sports media landscape, even during a period marked by high-profile international competitions such as the Olympic Games.** Despite this favourable context for broader visibility, the findings across all formats — newspapers, television, online magazines, and social media — reveal a lack of regular, diverse, and sustained coverage of women's sport.

In the print press, 77.5% of the analysed editions included at least one reference to female athletes. However, **the depth of coverage was minimal:** most editions contained one or fewer stories about women's sport, while nearly nine in ten included five or more articles on male athletes. When present, the portrayal of women was generally affirmative and performance-oriented, yet 29% of articles reproduced gender stereotypes, often linked to emotional traits or passive roles. **The focus remained narrow, typically confined to elite-level competitions, with limited presence of leadership narratives or personal stories. Visual content was also marginal, with most images appearing in small formats or relegated to secondary layout positions.**

Television coverage followed a similar pattern. While 33 out of 40 episodes included some mention of female athletes, the total airtime dedicated to women was just 16 minutes across eight months. Representation was largely episodic, concentrated around competitions or results, and rarely extended to broader storytelling or consistent presence. Reports overwhelmingly focused on professional football or Olympic-level success, with amateur and developmental contexts virtually absent.

Online sports magazines showed modest inclusion. Only 14 of the 20 weekly editions mentioned female athletes, yielding a total of 32 relevant articles. Coverage favoured individual sports and Olympic contexts, while grassroots or amateur representation was extremely limited. Although sexist language was rare, a quarter of the texts trivialised performance, and subtle stereotypes persisted. The tone was generally positive, but fragmented and insufficient to disrupt dominant editorial routines.

The analysis of social media focused on the institutional X (formerly Twitter) accounts of DAZN España and EFE Noticias. Out of 60 posting instances, only 40% included any mention of female athletes, and even fewer offered meaningful visibility. In 60% of the cases, women were completely absent. When they did appear, mentions were often brief. However, visual portrayals were remarkably affirmative: 95.9% of the images framed women positively, with no signs of sexualisation or objectification — a noteworthy contrast with historic patterns of media sexism. Still, the low frequency of inclusion suggests that editorial priorities continue to structurally favour men's sports, particularly football.

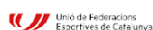
Taken together, these results reveal that the marginalisation of women in Spanish sports media lies more in omission than in overt discrimination. Female athletes are generally portrayed with respect when they appear, but their presence is still too sporadic to reshape dominant narratives. Editorial dependence on elite success and the overwhelming centrality of men's football leave little room for alternative stories — whether from grassroots sport, amateur competitions, or female-dominated disciplines. Although some of the analysed samples were small, the consistency of the pattern across formats suggests a structural imbalance. Addressing it requires moving beyond the elimination of stereotypes and towards the full integration of female athletes into the everyday editorial agenda — not as exceptions, but as visible and valued protagonists of the sporting world



“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Perception of the portrayal of women’s
athletes in sports media



Co-funded by
the European Union



Background and Rationale

This study is adapted from the experimental design of Jones and Greer (2011), which examined how the visual portrayal of female athletes influences audience perceptions. Research on gender and sport shows that such perceptions are shaped by culturally embedded gender schemas, mental frameworks that categorise traits, roles, and activities as more appropriate for women or men (Bem, 1981; Campbell, Shirley, & Candy, 2004). In sport, these schemas typically link men to strength, speed, and physical contact, while associating women with aesthetics, grace, and artistic expression (Koivula, 2001).

Media coverage often reinforces these expectations: female athletes receive less exposure than male athletes, and when they do appear, attention frequently shifts from performance to physical appearance (Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Billings, Halone, & Denham, 2002; Vincent, 2003; Duke & Greer, 2008; Duncan, 1990). This dynamic can shape public perceptions in different ways. In masculinised sports such as football (soccer), female athletes may face stereotypes questioning their femininity or credibility (Krane et al., 2004; Harrison & Lynch, 2005). In feminised sports such as volleyball, portrayals often emphasise conventional femininity through posing, styling, or the “thin ideal” (Duke & Greer, 2008; Duncan, 1990; Bernstein, 2002) which can attract attention but shift focus away from athletic competence (Cunningham, Fink, & Kenix, 2008).

The POWER Project applies this framework to two contrasting sport contexts football, representing a more masculinised domain, and volleyball, a more feminised one to assess whether sport context and portrayal shape audience interest and gender-typing of sports. The research questions, adapted from Jones and Greer (2011), are:

RQ1: Does a more feminine portrayal of a female athlete increase audience interest in the accompanying news story?

RQ2: Does such portrayal increase audience interest in the sport being played?

RQ3: Does depicting a non-stereotypical athlete in each sport reduce the gender-typing of that sport?

In adapting the original design, the POWER study focuses on sport-typing contexts rather than varying feminine appearance. Standardised news-style stimuli were used, and measurement invariance testing was incorporated to ensure valid cross-country comparisons.

Method

Study Design and Objectives

This study is part of the POWER Project – The Portrayal of Women Athletes in Sports Media, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The investigation replicates the conceptual framework and core procedures of Jones and Greer (2011), adapting them to the

cultural and linguistic contexts of the six participating countries—Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The objective was to analyse audience perceptions of female athletes across different sport contexts using standardised online sports news reports as stimuli, and to compare responses across countries after establishing measurement equivalence.

Participants and Context

Data were collected in six participating countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Each country disseminated the study through institutional networks, social media, and partner organisations to recruit participants from the general population. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The final dataset included valid responses from all six countries, enabling cross-national analysis.

Procedure

The experimental design followed the structure of the reference study. For each participant, an online survey was created and hosted on a dedicated platform. The procedure involved two main steps:

1. Stimulus Presentation – Participants accessed a page containing a sports news article featuring a female athlete. Two sports disciplines were used: football (soccer) and volleyball, each represented by a fictional female athlete adapted for the local context.
2. Questionnaire Completion – Immediately after reading the article, participants were directed to an online questionnaire. The survey included validated scales from the original study, measuring interest in the story, interest in sport, and perceptions related to sexualisation and objectification. All questionnaires were administered in English, the working language of the project, to maintain consistency across countries.

Experimental Conditions

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Each condition consisted of a short online sports news story accompanied by a photograph of a female athlete. The story, approximately 200 words in length, was identical across conditions, differing only in the sport mentioned in the headline and throughout the text. It described that the featured athlete, a standout player for her team, had recently been recognised as the top defensive player in her sport by a national-level sports association.

Two of the conditions depicted a female football (soccer) player—representing a sport generally perceived as more masculinised—while the other two depicted a female volleyball player—representing a sport generally perceived as more feminised. For each sport, two distinct photographic portrayals of the fictional athlete were used: one emphasising a more athletic/neutral appearance, and one with a more traditionally feminine appearance. This manipulation was based solely on the photograph accompanying the story, ensuring that the textual content remained constant across all conditions.

All athlete names and biographical details were fictional and adapted to match the linguistic and cultural context of each participating country, while keeping the structure and informational content equivalent across all national samples.

Measures

The instrument included three main scales adapted from Jones and Greer (2011):

- **Interest in the Story Scale.** This scale was divided into two subdimensions: *Positive Appeal* (6 items) and *Rejection/Indifference* (6 items).
- **Interest in Sport Scale.** This scale comprised 8 items assessing participants' general evaluations of sport.
- **Sex-Typing Scale.** This scale included 4 items capturing stereotypical associations of sport with masculinity.

Responses were recorded on Likert-type scales consistent with the original study, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with the underlying construct.

Table 177 Constructs and Items

Construct	Item wording
Interest in the Story Scale	This article is very appealing to me.
Positive appeal	This is a moving article. This article makes me want to know more about the topic. This article makes me feel good. This is a wonderful article. This is a fascinating article.
Interest in the Story Scale	I would probably ignore this article if I saw it in a magazine.
Rejection / Indifference	This article is of little interest to me. I don't like this article. This is the kind of article that is easily forgotten. I am tired of this kind of content. This article leaves me indifferent.
Interest in Sport Scale	For you, following sports (watching, reading about, or playing) is 1 = boring, 7 = exciting. For you, following sports is 1 = uninteresting, 7 = very interesting. For you, following sports is 1 = worthless, 7 = valuable. For you, following sports is 1 = unappealing, 7 = very appealing. For you, following sports is 1 = useless, 7 = useful. For you, following sports is 1 = unnecessary, 7 = necessary. For you, following sports is 1 = irrelevant, 7 = relevant. For you, following sports is 1 = not important, 7 = very important.

Construct	Item wording
Sex-Typing Scale	Female athletes who participate in this sport tend to be “butch.” The sport typically requires the athlete to be very muscular. This sport is traditionally associated with masculinity. Female athletes who play this sport are often viewed as less traditionally feminine.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in several sequential steps:

1. **Internal Consistency** – Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated for each scale within each country, as well as for the combined dataset. Reverse-coded items were inverted prior to calculation to ensure scoring consistency.
2. **Measurement Invariance Testing** – To verify that the scales were comparable across the six participating countries, a stepwise multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed in *jamovi*:
 - Configural invariance – baseline model with no constraints, testing whether the same factor structure was valid across groups.
 - Metric invariance – factor loadings constrained to equality across groups, testing whether the constructs had the same meaning in all countries.
 - Scalar invariance – factor loadings and intercepts constrained to equality across groups, testing whether observed score differences reflected genuine latent differences.

Model fit was evaluated using CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR indices. Measurement invariance was considered acceptable when the changes between nested models met the recommended thresholds of $\Delta CFI \leq 0.01$ and $\Delta RMSEA \leq 0.015$.

3. **Final Dataset** – Only after scalar invariance was established were cross-country comparisons conducted, ensuring that any differences in scores could be interpreted as substantive rather than methodological.
4. **Comparative Analysis (MANOVA)** – Following the approach of Jones and Greer (2011), a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the final dataset to examine differences in dependent variables (interest in the story, interest in sport, and sex-typing) across experimental conditions and countries. This analysis allowed for the simultaneous assessment of main effects and interactions, providing a more robust understanding of how sport context and portrayal influenced audience perceptions.

Results

Participants

The study sample consisted of **720 participants from the six countries** involved in the POWER project (Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), with relevant variations in terms of gender, age, educational level, sports participation, and ethnic background.

In Bulgaria, the group of 91 participants was mostly composed of women, with a predominance of young adults aged between 25 and 34 years. The majority reported regular sports participation and a high educational level, particularly at undergraduate and master's levels. The ethnic composition was highly homogeneous, with a strong predominance of white/Caucasian participants.

In Greece, 131 individuals took part, most of them women. The group was mainly distributed between 25 and 34 years of age, with a significant percentage reporting regular sports practice. In terms of education, most participants held undergraduate or master's degrees, confirming a highly educated sample. Almost all respondents identified as white/Caucasian.

Hungary had 112 participants, most of them men, although with a considerable representation of women. The predominant age range was 25–44 years, and almost all respondents reported regular sports participation. A high educational profile was also observed, with a predominance of graduates and postgraduates. The ethnic composition was mostly white/Caucasian, though with some diversity.

In Italy, the sample included 149 participants, with a slight male predominance. Age was relatively balanced between young adults and middle-aged participants, and more than 90% reported regular sports practice. The educational levels showed a strong presence of graduates and postgraduates, with Italy being one of the countries with the highest proportion of doctoral degree holders. The ethnic composition was mainly white/Caucasian, with some records of other backgrounds.

In Portugal, 115 individuals participated, with a predominance of men but a relevant presence of women and small representations of non-binary participants. The sample was relatively balanced in terms of age, including both young adults and middle-aged participants. The vast majority reported regular sports participation and held higher education degrees, mainly at undergraduate and master's levels. The ethnic composition was largely homogeneous, with a majority of white/Caucasian participants.

Finally, Spain had 122 participants, with a higher percentage of women compared to the other countries. The age distribution was broader, including a significant proportion of participants



over 55 years. Three-quarters of the sample reported regular sports participation, and the educational level was high, with a predominance of undergraduate and master's degrees. While most identified as white/Caucasian, a comparatively greater degree of ethnic diversity was observed.

Table 178 Sample characteristics by country

Country	N	% Women	% Men	Most frequent age group	% Sports participation	Most frequent education level	Majority ethnic background
Bulgaria	91	58.2%	40.7%	25–34 years (39.6%)	84.6%	Undergraduate (56.0%)	White/Caucasian (90.1%)
Greece	131	67.2%	29.8%	25–34 years (47.3%)	84.7%	Master's degree (44.3%)	White/Caucasian (95.4%)
Hungary	112	44.6%	50.9%	25–34 years (48.2%)	96.4%	Master's degree (44.6%)	White/Caucasian (69.6%)
Italy	149	45.0%	55.0%	25–34 years (29.5%)	90.6%	Undergraduate (32.9%)	White/Caucasian (77.2%)
Portugal	115	43.5%	54.8%	35–44 years (22.6%)	87.0%	Undergraduate (40.0%)	White/Caucasian (85.2%)
Spain	122	62.3%	37.7%	55+ years (26.2%)	75.4%	Master's degree (41.8%)	White/Caucasian (81.1%)

Reliability Analysis

Internal Consistency

The assessment of internal consistency across the four scales confirms that the measurement model applied in the POWER project is both statistically robust and theoretically balanced, offering a reliable foundation for subsequent comparative analyses.

The “Interest in the Story - Positive Appeal and Rejection/Indifference” scales both achieved strong reliability at the global level ($\alpha = .867$ and $\alpha = .893$, respectively). Country-specific results consistently surpassed the recommended minimum threshold of $\alpha = .70$, with most values approaching or exceeding .85. This suggests that perceptions of attractiveness and disengagement in media articles are measured with high precision and cross-cultural stability.

The Interest in Sport scale exhibited exceptional reliability (global $\alpha = .963$), with country-level values ranging from $\alpha = .931$ in Italy to $\alpha = .975$ in Portugal. These results indicate not only strong internal consistency but also remarkable homogeneity across cultural contexts, reinforcing the robustness of this construct as a stable indicator of participants' valuation of sport.

Although the Masculine Stereotype of Sport scale reported comparatively lower coefficients, its global reliability ($\alpha = .790$) and country-level values ($\alpha = .715-.829$) remain within the acceptable range for social science research. This pattern suggests that, while perceptions of masculinity in sport may reflect more context-specific interpretations, the scale still provides sufficiently reliable measurement for valid cross-country comparison.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the four scales maintain an appropriate balance between breadth of measurement and statistical reliability, minimising risks of redundancy while ensuring construct stability.

Table 179 Cronbach's alpha by scale and country

Scale	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Portugal	Spain	Global
1. Rejection/Indifference (6 items)	$\alpha = .840$	$\alpha = .889$	$\alpha = .787$	$\alpha = .864$	$\alpha = .846$	$\alpha = .879$	$\alpha = .867$
2. Positive Appeal (6 items)	$\alpha = .850$	$\alpha = .877$	$\alpha = .883$	$\alpha = .886$	$\alpha = .864$	$\alpha = .904$	$\alpha = .893$
3. Interest in Sport (8 items)	$\alpha = .962$	$\alpha = .964$	$\alpha = .971$	$\alpha = .931$	$\alpha = .975$	$\alpha = .972$	$\alpha = .963$
4. Sex-Typing (4 items)	$\alpha = .823$	$\alpha = .829$	$\alpha = .715$	$\alpha = .749$	$\alpha = .763$	$\alpha = .771$	$\alpha = .790$

Measurement Invariance Testing

After that, a Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) conducted using Jamovi (v2.4), to evaluate the factorial structure of the measurement model. Although some fit indices fell slightly below conventional thresholds, (see, Table 3) the overall solution was deemed both theoretically and empirically robust. This decision was based on the prior validation provided by the original study on which the present research is grounded, as well as on the consistency of results across the different countries. In addition, a multigroup invariance analysis was then conducted to test the equivalence of the measurement model across the six countries. The results of ΔCFI and $\Delta RMSEA$ demonstrated support for configural and metric invariance, confirming that the same factorial structure and factor loadings were comparable across groups. However, scalar invariance was not fully supported, as the imposition of intercept constraints led to a noticeable decline.

Table 180 Multi-group CFA measurement invariance results

Model	Description	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	ΔCFI	$\Delta RMSEA$
Configural invariance	Same factor structure across groups, no equality constraints	0.853	0.835	0.103	–	–
Metric invariance	Equal factor loadings across groups	0.845	0.837	0.102	–0.008	–0.001
Scalar invariance	Equal factor loadings and intercepts across groups	0.827	0.829	0.106	–0.018	+0.004

To verify the effectiveness of the experimental manipulations, independent samples t-tests were conducted.

First, participants evaluated the appearance of the athlete in the photo on a scale from 1 (feminine) to 5 (masculine). Results revealed a highly significant difference between conditions, $t(718) = 24.35$, $p < .001$. Athletes depicted with a masculine appearance were rated as substantially more masculine ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.06$) than those with a feminine appearance ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 0.78$). The effect size was extremely large ($d = 1.81$), indicating that the manipulation of athlete appearance was highly effective.

Second, participants rated the type of sport (football vs. volleyball) on the same feminine–masculine continuum. As expected, football was perceived as significantly more masculine ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.89$) compared to volleyball ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.75$), $t(717) = 12.64$, $p < .001$. The effect size was large ($d = 0.94$), confirming the intended perception of football as a masculine sport and volleyball as a feminine sport. Together, these results confirm that the manipulations of both athlete appearance and sport type were successful, ensuring the validity of the subsequent analyses.

Discussion

Aims of this study

This study, adapted from Jones and Greer (2011), examined how three independent factors: Country (Bulgaria, $N=91$; Greece, $N=131$; Hungary, $N=112$; Italy, $N=149$; Portugal, $N=115$; Spain, $N=122$), Sport (Football or Volleyball), and Type of Photograph (athlete portrayed with a more masculine or more feminine appearance) influenced four dependent variables. The Rejection/Indifference scale measured the likelihood of respondents ignoring the article, perceiving it as uninteresting, or experiencing indifference. The Positive Appeal scale captured positive interest, emotional engagement, and the desire to learn more about the article. The Interest in Sport scale assessed the valuation and perceived relevance of sport for the respondent. Finally, the Sex-typing scale evaluated perceptions of masculinity, physical strength, and reduced femininity attributed to the sport.

Assumption Checks

Box's M test was significant ($M = 380.082$, $F = 1.887$, $p < .001$), indicating differences in covariance matrices across groups and suggesting heterogeneity. In response to this violation, multivariate effects were interpreted using Pillai's Trace, which is more robust under such conditions (see Table 5).

Levene's tests revealed violations of homogeneity of variances, particularly for Rejection/Indifference ($p = .001$) and Positive Appeal ($p < .001$). Consequently, post-hoc analyses were essential for interpreting group differences.

Multivariate Effects (MANOVA)

The MANOVA revealed significant effects for:

Table 181 MANOVA Results

Factor	Pillai's Trace	F	df	p	Partial η^2	Power
Country	.133	2.159	16, 2316	<.001	.033	.999
Sport	.265	52.079	4, 578	<.001	.265	1.000
Type of Photograph	.019	2.841	4, 578	.029	.019	.737
Country $\times$ Sport	.061	1.397	16, 2316	.003	.015	.979

These findings indicate that the set of dependent variables varied significantly according to country, sport, type of photograph, and the country $\times$ sport interaction.

Analysis by Dependent Variable

Post-hoc comparisons (Tukey HSD) specified the differences between countries.

Table 182 Post-hoc Comparisons between Countries (Tukey HSD)

Dependent Variable	Bulgaria	Greece	Hungary	Italy	Portugal	Spain	Significant Differences
Rejection / Indifference	3.85*	4.55*	4.21	3.92*	4.27	5.19	Greece > Bulgaria/Italy
Positive Appeal	3.43*	3.89	3.54†	4.00*	3.68	2.53*	Italy > Bulgaria; Italy > Spain
Interest in Sport	4.45*	4.67*	5.13*	4.82*	5.58*	5.22*	Portugal > Hungary > Italy > Greece > Bulgaria
Sex-typing	2.92*	2.71	2.83	2.59*	2.67	2.04*	Bulgaria > Italy; Bulgaria > Spain

Notes: *p < .05; † trend (p < .10).

Rejection / Indifference

The variable Rejection/Indifference showed significant effects of sport ($F = 7.729$, $p = .006$, $\eta^2 = .013$) and country ($F = 4.523$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .030$). Football was associated with higher levels of rejection compared to volleyball.

The highest mean was observed in Greece (4.55), significantly higher than Bulgaria (3.85) and Italy (3.92). This result suggests that, among the countries analysed, Greek participants were the most likely to reject or remain indifferent to news about female athletes. This may be related to the limited presence of women's sport in national media, low investment in women's leagues, and a sports culture strongly centred on men's football and basketball.

Empirical evidence reinforces this pattern: a study that analysed 2,954 covers of five Greek sports newspapers found that only 2.7% of headlines and 3.5% of photographs featured women, mostly in non-competitive contexts (PANR, 2024). POWER national reports confirmed this: in 91% of editions, there were more than eight articles on male athletes, but only 6.4% on female athletes, while 30.8% contained no reference to women's sport at all. In the project's focus group, journalists and athletes highlighted the cultural dominance of men's football and basketball, the absence of women in decision-making positions, and the lack of media recognition as structural barriers to visibility.

In Spain (5.19), rejection was also high, though with a different profile. Although recent years have seen major advances in the professionalisation of women's football — culminating in the 2023 World Cup victory — POWER national reports showed that 53% of editions contained no mention of female athletes. Moreover, when present, women were often portrayed in secondary roles or accompanied by sexist language framing. Thus, despite institutional advances, unequal and stereotyped coverage may explain the high levels of rejection observed among the Spanish public.

Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary (4.21), and Portugal (4.27) did not differ significantly from each other, falling into an intermediate level of rejection.

Positive Appeal

The variable Positive Appeal showed significant differences between countries ($F = 3.474$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .023$) and a country $\times$ sport interaction ($F = 3.033$, $p = .017$, $\eta^2 = .021$).

Italy (4.00) recorded the highest value, significantly higher than Bulgaria (3.43) and Spain (2.53). This result may be associated with the growing media recognition of women's sport in Italy, especially after the professionalisation of Serie A Femminile in 2022/23 and the broadcast deal with DAZN until 2027, which expanded athletes' visibility. POWER reports confirmed this trend: although only 70% of editions included references to female athletes and the average number of articles on men (5.48) was more than double that for women (2.09), the language was predominantly respectful and positive, valuing achievements and talent without resorting to stereotypes.

By contrast, Spain (2.53) recorded the lowest level of attraction. This finding is particularly striking given that Spain has been at the forefront of recent progress in European women's football. However, national reports from POWER show that Spanish media coverage is still strongly marked by gender stereotypes and quantitative inequality. Only 23.5% of analysed editions included female athletes, often relegated to side notes or framed through objectification. The discrepancy between institutional progress and media representation may therefore explain the low levels of appreciation among the Spanish public.

Greece (3.89), Hungary (3.54), and Portugal (3.68) fell into intermediate ranges, with no significant differences between them.

Interest in Sport

Interest in Sport showed a strong country effect ($F = 8.950$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .058$). Portugal (5.58) and Hungary (5.13) recorded the highest levels, followed by Spain (5.22), Italy (4.82), Greece (4.67), and Bulgaria (4.45).

In Portugal, this result may be associated with the central role of football in the sports ecosystem, but also with the growing recognition of female athletes in sports such as judo (Telma Monteiro) and athletics (Patrícia Mamona). However, POWER reports showed that only 27.4% of analysed editions included references to women, and in 69.1% there was no mention of female athletes at all. When present, women appeared mostly in elite contexts, often framed in a positive and valorising way.

In Hungary, high interest may be linked to the prominence of aquatic and Olympic sports, such as swimming and water polo, with a strong national tradition. The Hungarian POWER report highlighted that, despite inequality, these sports provide greater visibility for female athletes, particularly during international competitions.

Spain, with a mean of 5.22, also showed relatively high interest. Although structural inequalities persist, the national report noted that the international success of the women's football team and the growing visibility of Olympic athletes have reinforced the relevance of women's sport, particularly during major events.

Bulgaria (4.45) and Greece (4.67) showed lower interest, consistent with the reduced media recognition of female athletes in their national contexts.

Sex-Typing

The sex-typing variable presented the strongest effect in the analysis ($F = 198.561$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .256$), with football perceived as significantly more masculine than volleyball. There was also a smaller effect of photograph type ($F = 4.287$, $p = .039$, $\eta^2 = .007$), where more masculinised images slightly reinforced this perception.

Bulgaria (2.92) recorded the highest mean, significantly higher than Italy (2.59) and Spain (2.04). This reflects the Bulgarian structural context, where women's football faces severe challenges: absence of formal contracts, lack of support in cases of injury or maternity, and weak media visibility (Angelova-Igova & Naydenova, 2023). The POWER report confirmed that in 19 editions more than eight articles were dedicated to male athletes, compared to only three editions with the same number on women.



In Spain, the perception of sport as masculine was the lowest (2.04). This finding seems aligned with recent advances in the recognition of women's football, which have generated greater public acceptance, even though coverage remains unequal. The national report highlighted that although references to women were infrequent, when present they were often framed positively, particularly in elite competitive contexts.

Thus, while contexts such as Bulgaria reinforce the image of sport as a male territory, countries like Spain are beginning to show greater acceptance of female presence in sport, albeit not yet systematically.

Integration of results and recommendations

The comparison of the national reports from the POWER project with the findings of Jones & Greer (2011) allows not only for the identification of similarities and divergences but also for the development of concrete action points for European sports media. While the North American study mainly highlighted the effects of sport type and visual manipulation on perceptions of masculinity and attraction, the European results emphasise the strength of contextual differences between countries. This means that communication strategies need to be designed on two levels: common pan-European levers and country-specific recommendations.

At the pan-European level, five levers can be prioritised. The first is to decentralise the “monopoly” of football, by establishing minimum quotas of weekly coverage for women's sports in other disciplines, combining elite sport narratives with grassroots stories (youth development, coaches, referees, administrators). Secondly, the promotion of photojournalism oriented towards agency and competence is required, privileging action shots and decision-making moments, while avoiding passive or sexualised portrayals. The third lever concerns the architecture of headlines, applying the 3E rule — competitive effect (result/record), storyline (trajectory/obstacles), and social/community impact — and replacing stereotyped metaphors with a repository of “competence metaphors.” Fourthly, there is a need for an annual editorial calendar, ensuring a regular weekly rhythm of content on women's sport and synchronisation with national and international competitive cycles. Finally, strong governance and accountability mechanisms are essential, including internal audits, consultative panels with athletes and journalists, and quarterly KPIs covering diversity of coverage, tone, imagery, and prominence.

Nevertheless, national differences demonstrate that these levers need to be adapted to each specific context. In Greece, where rejection levels are highest, efforts should focus on strong narrative hooks, high-impact visual campaigns, and partnerships with local clubs and federations to reduce symbolic distance. In Spain, the challenge is to align institutional advances with media coverage, by implementing anti-stereotype editorial standards and ensuring systematic visibility beyond major events, particularly capitalising on the momentum of women's football. In Bulgaria, where masculine stereotypes remain strong, counter-narratives should highlight tactical competence, leadership, and social impact, supported by consistent visibility between

events. Italy, by contrast, shows higher levels of attraction and provides a positive editorial base; here, the priority is to scale up best practices, expand coverage to youth and lower divisions, and share successful formats with partner newsrooms. In Hungary, with strong interest and aquatic sports as an anchor, the aim should be to transfer this successful model of storytelling to other disciplines and to valorise women's teams as national symbols. In Portugal, where interest is also high but coverage remains football-centric, the strategy should focus on transforming peak events into multi-piece narrative cycles, using football as a gateway to diversify interest in other sports, and consolidating the link between prominent imagery and positive framing.

The connection between statistical findings and editorial decisions becomes particularly clear. In contexts of high rejection/indifference (e.g., Greece and Spain), the priority must be to ensure competitive relevance and continuity of coverage, preventing women's sport from being represented only sporadically. For attraction/appreciation, replicating Italian best practices — respectful language and merit-based narratives — is recommended, particularly in settings where attraction remains low. Variations in interest in sport across countries should guide strategies: in high-interest contexts (Portugal, Hungary), deepening and serialising content is appropriate, whereas in lower-interest contexts (Bulgaria, Greece), accessible formats such as short videos and quick guides should be prioritised. Finally, in the case of masculine stereotyping, which remains strongly linked to football, the solution lies less in visual manipulation alone and more in editorial framing: language, diversity of protagonists, and the consistent portrayal of agency and competence.

Overall, these findings reinforce the idea that perceptions are shaped less by isolated visual cues than by the broader media and cultural ecosystem in which they are embedded. The challenge ahead is to translate this evidence into consistent editorial lines capable of reducing rejection, increasing attraction, and building sustainable narratives for female athletes in European sports communication.

Limitations

The quantitative study conducted within the POWER project presents some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample was collected across six European countries, but it does not represent the full cultural and sporting diversity of the continent. The differences observed between the countries analysed reveal relevant patterns but cannot be generalised to Europe as a whole. Secondly, the methodological choice of normalising responses using Z-scores ensured comparability across countries and variables but may have reduced individual nuances in the responses, particularly in contexts with smaller sample sizes. Finally, the analysis focused on four main variables (rejection/indifference, attraction/appreciation, interest in sport, and masculine stereotype). This choice made it possible to identify broad patterns but excluded other dimensions that could also contribute to a deeper understanding of public perceptions of the media representation of female athletes. These limitations do not diminish the relevance of

the findings but highlight the need for future research to include a wider range of countries and variables, as well as complementary analyses that can capture more nuanced cultural and media-specific features.



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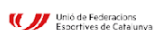
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**“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”
Cross-countries Analysis – EU compiled study**



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Introduction

Within the scope of the POWER – The Portrayal of Women Athletes in Sports Media project, the cross-country analysis aims to compare the results obtained in each participating country to identify common trends and significant differences in the media representation of female athletes. This approach is essential to understanding how cultural, social, institutional and media-related factors shape the visibility and framing of women in sport. By bringing together national findings within a single framework, it is possible not only to map shared patterns but also to highlight contextual specificities that can inform more effective and tailored strategies for each reality.

Across the six countries analysed, common challenges regarding gender equality in sport were identified, though with varying expressions and intensities. In Spain, despite a gradual increase in women's participation in different roles, leadership remains overwhelmingly male, with only 11.1% of Catalan federation presidencies and 18.9% of registered coaching positions held by women. Media coverage continues to be marked by persistent under-representation and stereotypical framing, with female figures often portrayed in secondary or non-sporting roles. In Italy, although women accounted for 47% of the Olympic delegation in Paris 2024, leadership positions are scarce — with only two female presidents of national federations — and women make up 20.7% of all coaches. The media visibility of female athletes remains limited, although there are signs of improvement in the reduction of stereotypical and objectifying content.

In Hungary, women represent around one-third of registered athletes but only 8–10% of certified coaches, with minimal presence in elite coaching. Media coverage of female athletes accounts for less than 10% of total sports content and tends to increase only during major international events. In Greece, although female participation has gradually increased, structural barriers, inequalities in access to resources and the strong male dominance in decision-making positions persist. Media coverage continues to favour male athletes and to perpetuate stereotypical narratives. In Bulgaria, while female athletes' visibility remains low, when they are featured in the media, coverage tends to be positive, focusing on achievements and skills, with a lower incidence of sexist language — although inconsistently applied. Finally, in Portugal, women make up about one-third of all sports club members but hold only 10% of coaching positions and 15% of elite roles. Media visibility is extremely limited, with only 2% of sports news and 1% of images including women, with women's football accounting for more than one-third of this residual coverage.

Table 183 Main indicators by country and format

Country	Press (presence of female athletes)	Online (presence)	Social Media X (presence)	Television (presence / total time)	Relevant observations
Portugal	38.7% of editions (24/62)	22.6% of editions (7/31)	37.3% of posts (22/59)	12.8% of episodes (5/39) / 7 min	Positive coverage but infrequent; absence of sexualisation; focus on elite sport
Bulgaria	Sporadic mentions; positive tone	Consistent but superficial inclusion	50% of posts referenced; 2/3 without images	Rare presence outside elite sport	Persistent stereotypes; sexualisation of female TV journalists observed
Greece	69% of editions; 6.4% with >8 articles	100% of editions	55% of posts; 67% without images	33% of episodes (13/39) / 21 min	High digital inclusion; low depth in television coverage
Hungary	84% of editions; 18.4% stereotyping; 10.3% sexualisation	84.2% of editions	56.9% of posts; 6.1% stereotyping	16% of episodes (7/43) / 10 min	Strong print presence but with stereotypes; elite sport dominant
Italy	70% of editions (30/43)	55.6% of editions (10/18)	55% of posts	17.9% of episodes (5/28)	Positive representation but limited diversity; small online sample
Spain	77.5% of editions	70% of editions (14/20)	40% of posts; 95.9% positive images	82.5% of episodes (33/40) / 16 min	Positive visual presence on social media; short total airtime on TV

Cross-country interpretative synthesis

The findings from the six participating countries suggest that the under-representation of female athletes in European sports media is a frequent phenomenon across formats, platforms and cultural contexts. Even during periods with greater potential for visibility, such as the Olympic Games, women's presence in sports news remained limited, generally linked to elite events and lacking sustained coverage over time.

While portrayals were generally positive, with a low incidence of explicitly sexist language, this does not guarantee equitable representation. The main limitation lies in the frequency and diversity of coverage: female athletes tend to appear in occasional narratives, often limited to sporting performance, with less attention given to leadership roles, social contributions or personal stories.

The editorial weight of men's football emerges as a common factor that, to varying degrees, shapes coverage in the countries analysed. Even in contexts with strong traditions in women's sports — such as gymnastics in Bulgaria, canoeing and water polo in Hungary, or volleyball and athletics in Portugal — the predominance of men's football reduces space for other sports and limits thematic diversity.

Some trends reinforce these observations:

- **Television presence:** Spain has the highest proportion of episodes featuring female athletes, yet with short total airtime. Portugal recorded the lowest presence.
- **Print coverage:** Hungary recorded strong female presence in print media but with notable levels of stereotyping and sexualisation.
- **Online coverage:** Greece was the only country where all online editions included women, but this consistency was not reflected in other formats. Portugal and Italy had the lowest rates.
- **Social media and images:** Spain stood out for systematically using positive images, while in Bulgaria and Greece the absence of images was common.

The data indicate that the marginalisation of women in European sports media results more from patterns of absence and intermittency than from explicit discrimination. The inclusion of female athletes often depends on isolated, high-profile events, particularly elite-level success, which hinders the construction of consistent and sustained narratives.

Therefore, the results suggest that overcoming this scenario requires not only avoiding stereotypes but also adopting editorial strategies that ensure the continuous and diverse integration of female athletes into the daily agenda of sports media. Editorial, institutional and regulatory incentives may play a key role in this process, creating conditions for more regular, plural and socially relevant visibility.

Insights for improving media coverage

The cross-country results of the POWER project show that although the media portrayal of female athletes is generally positive and with low incidence of explicit sexist language, their presence remains intermittent and poorly diversified. Female visibility in European sports media continues to rely heavily on elite events and high-impact competitive moments, limiting the development of consistent and sustained narratives over time.

Table 184 Summary of recommendations for improving media coverage of female athletes

Area for improvement	Patterns observed in the study	Potential for action	Examples of good practices identified
Frequency and continuity of coverage	Intermittent presence, concentrated in elite events; lack of year-round narratives.	Ensure regular visibility with a diversified agenda, including less publicised sports.	Spain and Greece showed greater consistency on social media and online platforms.
Diversification of framing	Almost exclusive focus on immediate sporting performance; little space for leadership, social impact or personal stories.	Include content on behind-the-scenes, careers, community contributions and challenges faced.	Bulgaria valued skills and achievements; Spain used positive images to reinforce narratives.
Reducing the disproportionate weight of men's football	Editorial monopoly of men's football, even in countries with strong women's sports traditions.	Highlight strong women's sports and diversify sports themes.	Hungary, Bulgaria and Portugal have relevant women's sports that could be promoted.
Consistent use of visual elements	Frequent absence of images or limited use to static portraits; lack of visual dynamism.	Use action shots, leadership images and achievement visuals to increase impact and engage audiences.	Spain consistently and positively used images on social media.
Institutional support and editorial policies	Lack of clear targets for gender balance in media coverage.	Create editorial guidelines, internal targets and partnerships with federations and clubs to facilitate regular coverage.	Possible replication of the valorisation strategy adopted by some Bulgarian newsrooms.

To address these limitations, structural and editorial changes are needed to ensure the regular and plural integration of women into sports news. This requires adopting a more strategic approach to content selection, ensuring that different sports, contexts and roles in sport — such as leadership, social contributions and career paths — are included in the media agenda.

Another critical issue is the need to rebalance the editorial dominance of men's football, which almost monopolises prime coverage space in the countries analysed. Even in contexts where there are successful women's sports with tradition, such as volleyball and athletics in Portugal, gymnastics in Bulgaria or water polo in Hungary, coverage remains residual. Proactive strategies to increase the visibility of these sports could contribute to a more diverse narrative and a fairer representation of the sporting landscape.

The visual dimension also requires attention: the absence or limited use of images in media pieces reduces the potential for audience engagement and perpetuates the invisibility of female athletes. Good practices observed — such as the systematic use of positive images in Spain —

show that dynamic, action-based visual representations can reinforce perceptions of competence and relevance.

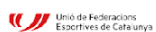
Finally, stronger cooperation between media outlets, federations, clubs and regulatory bodies could create a more supportive ecosystem for women's presence in sports media. Clear editorial guidelines, gender balance targets and institutional incentives could help transform patterns of absence into sustained inclusion practices.



ANNEX: DETAILS OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



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Research Methodology

“POWER – The portrayal of women athletes in sports media”

ERASMUS-SPORT-2023-SCP

Grant Agreement No: 101185115

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0.4	29/3/25	Final	Finalisation	Juliane Robra & Thiago Santos	SEA



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Executive Summary

This document is the detailed POWER Research Methodology, focusing on standardising the collection and analysis of data regarding the portrayal of women athletes in sports media across partner countries.

To address the complexity of data collection, methodological steps and literature review, SEA developed this document, providing detailed instructions to harmonise research processes among all partners.

The research team will consist of one responsible researcher per partner country, experienced in both qualitative and quantitative data collection. A lead researcher from SEA will support partners throughout the study, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. Each partner will analyse findings within their national context and produce a national report on the representation of women athletes in their respective media landscapes.

The investigation will involve several key steps. It will begin with a bibliometric analysis and literature review to assess and deepen knowledge of the theoretical field related to the portrayal of women athletes in sports media. This foundational understanding will lead to subsequent stages, including the organisation of focus groups, which will be built on SEA's previous research and the findings from the literature review. The analysis will then examine the representation of female athletes in textual, visual, and online media, using methodologies such as those of George et al. (2001). Finally, based on the study by Jones and Geer (2011), a questionnaire will be administered to assess the effects of feminine appearance on audience perceptions of female athletes and women's sport.



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Introduction of the research in the POWER Project

The POWER project aims to standardise the collection and analysis of data regarding the portrayal of women athletes in sports media across partner countries. Leveraging the expertise of the project partners, who have extensive experience in research on media representation, the sporting environment, and education, the project will systematically and efficiently gather data from literature, desk research, and focus groups. These activities will adhere to the “Research Guidelines” developed by the Sport Evolution Alliance (SEA), ensuring harmonised research methodologies across all partners.

Each partner will designate a responsible researcher to oversee the implementation of the project in their respective country. Once the data have been submitted through the designated platforms by the 1st of May 2025, partners will receive the database to develop their national reports, which must be finalised by 30 June 2025. Following this, SEA will consolidate the findings presented by the partners into a comprehensive EU Report, which will be finalised by 31st of August 2025.

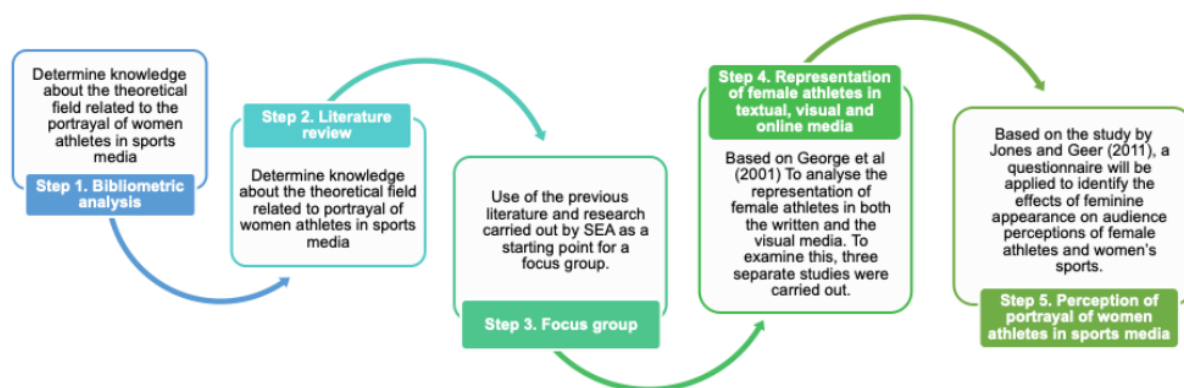
The research process consists of five key stages, including bibliometric analysis, focus groups, media analysis, audience perception surveys, and the preparation and consolidation of national and EU reports.



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Research Roadmap



Tasks/Months	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Step 1/2. Bibliometric and Literature review (SEA)									
Step 3. Focus group									
Step 4. Representation of female athletes in textual, visual and online media									
Step 5. Perception of portrayal of women athletes in sports media									
Data analysis (national report)									
Cross-cultural report (SEA)									



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Research Guidelines

3. 1. Step 1 and 2: Bibliometric Analysis and Literature Review

This systematic review was designed to identify and analyse academic production on the representation of women athletes in sports media over the past decade. The methodological approach followed the PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), ensuring transparency and rigour in the search, selection, and analysis procedures. The PRISMA checklist, comprising 27 items, was applied to structure the review and validate each step of the process.

Database selection and search strategy

Two leading academic databases — Web of Science and Scopus — were selected for data collection due to their recognised relevance in the fields of social sciences and sports studies. The search strategy was built around three core components:

1. Population – women athletes;
2. Phenomenon – media;
3. Context – sport.

Boolean operators were applied to combine the terms, connecting each group with “AND” and linking synonyms within each group with “OR”. The search terms and their combinations are presented in Table 1.

The timeframe was limited to the last ten years (2015–2025) to capture recent developments in the media landscape. Eligible publications included original research articles, reviews, and empirical studies published in indexed journals, with no restrictions on publication language.

Selection process and eligibility criteria

All retrieved records were imported into Rayyan software (Ouzzani et al., 2016) to facilitate organisation, detection of duplicates, and tracking of inclusion/exclusion decisions. Screening was conducted through a double-blind process by two independent reviewers with expertise in sports management.



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Studies were deemed eligible if they directly addressed the media representation of women athletes, regardless of sport modality. Exclusion criteria included:

- Off-topic publications;
- Conference abstracts;
- Proceedings or non-peer-reviewed documents.

After duplicate removal, the remaining records were screened by title and abstract to identify those meeting the inclusion criteria for full-text review. Studies passing this stage were then read in full to confirm eligibility, following the PRISMA flowchart process.

Data analysis and thematic categorisation

The included studies were systematically coded in an Excel database, recording details such as author(s), year, country, journal, objectives, and scope. A thematic analysis was conducted through iterative reading of titles, abstracts, and full texts, leading to the identification of four emergent thematic categories:

- The female athlete: biological narratives in media;
- Visibility and gender equity in sports media coverage;
- Social barriers faced by female athletes;
- Sexualisation and objectification in media portrayals.

Frequencies and distributions will be reviewed and tabulated to support the interpretation. Additionally, a relational bibliometric analysis will be carried out using VOSviewer (version 1.6.20) to map co-authorship networks and keyword relationships

Building on the bibliometric analysis, the literature review deepens the understanding of the theoretical field related to the portrayal of women athletes in sports media. By systematically analysing studies, this step identifies key themes, gaps, and methodologies that inform the project's focus and design. This review ensures that the research is grounded in existing knowledge while highlighting areas for further exploration.



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3.2. Step 3: Focus Groups

The application of the focus group technique allows us to collect an appropriate amount of data in a short period. However, we cannot argue with certainty about the spontaneity of the participants' contributions. Nevertheless, some of the information gathered during a focus group session will potentially be of great worth because it will be collected with great difficulty through the simple observation of reality (Freitas et al., 1998, p.4).

The goal of a focus group is for the participants to understand the topic of interest to the researcher, whether using it alone or in conjunction with other research methods.

Focus groups will be followed in the different cases under analysis, considering the female athletes. Taking advantage of the intersubjective and shared nature of this technique, we believe that this step will be particularly useful in identifying determinants of female athletes' media coverage, given that the review of the state-of-the-art points to very general factors. In this way, the perception of this phenomenon will be more accurate.

Main Objectives

- Reflect on the portrayal of women athletes in sports media.
- Discuss the causes and consequences of gender inequity in media coverage.

Inclusion Criteria

Each focus group will include:

- 2 journalists
- 2 media professionals
- 1 content creator
- 2 female athletes
- 3 additional people could represent other stakeholders (male athletes, people working in media or sports organisations)

Each partner will complete the Focus Group Composition Table.



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Each partner is responsible for having this minimum number and composition of participants. To ensure 10 participants in the Focus Group partner will validate the participation of 4 additional people.

Schedule and deadline

- From February to April 2025, each project partner will organise their focus group.
- Each partner will fill out the Focus Group Planning.
- The deadline for submission of the data from the focus group will be 1st of May 2025.

Steps for the data collection

Step 1. Pre-session

After selecting the participants, they should be contacted and provided with clear information listed below to ensure they understand their role and participation:

- This study aims “to identify possible impressions about causes and consequences of female athletes media coverage in the athlete's career.”
- Participation is voluntary
- The focus group can be held onsite or online
- No one will be identified during data collection and then in the data analysis
- The focus group can be recorded if all participants agree
- The focus group will last approximately 90 minutes

Step 2. Session

1. If possible, the place where the focus group will be held should be outside the organisation's environment, which should allow a more relaxed atmosphere during the meeting.
2. Participants should sit in a circle.
3. The session can be held online. In this case, the organisation must ensure that it takes place on a reliable online platform such as Zoom or Google Meet.
4. Before the session, all participants need to sign the 'Informed Consent Form'.
5. Authorisation for recording the session must be obtained from all participants through the 'Informed Consent Form' <https://forms.office.com/e/pJfEn0G2Q3>.



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6. Each participant must be identified by a Letter and a Number from the number of participants of each represented segment, for example: Journalist 1 (J1), Media Professional 1 (MP1), Content Creators 1 (CC1), Female Athlete 1 (FM1), General Stakeholder 1 (GS1).
7. There must be two individuals in the organisation responsible for:
 - A mediator who will ask the questions and conduct/facilitate the dialogue.
 - A note-taker responsible for documenting participants' responses, highlighting only the main points. This role is only necessary if the session is not recorded, as already mentioned.
8. As cited, in the case of the need to point out the answers of the participants, the participants must be identified with letters or numbers, for example:
 "Journalist 1 or A1 refers to the fact that female athletes receive less media coverage than male athletes."
 "Female Athlete 1 or FM1 refers to the observation that media coverage often sexualizes the image of female athletes."
 "CC1 refers to the idea that..." (Complete the idea to clarify the context.)
9. On the other hand, if the session is recorded, the data must be transcribed and entered in the online tool Microsoft Forms (see Input data).
10. At the beginning of the session, the moderator needs to explain:
 - The project
 - The aim of the session
 - The duration of the session
 - That there is no right or wrong answer
 - That the participants do not need to answer the questions if they do not feel comfortable.

Guide to conduct the session

1. Each participant will then have 1 or 2 minutes to introduce themselves.
2. At the end of the presentation, the moderator will initiate the questions for the discussion



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of the group.

3. Questions should be asked one at a time.
4. The questions are directed to the group, and the moderator should intermediate to understand if the answers given are related to the topic.
5. In addition, the moderator must understand the moment when the answers are repeated (or the theme is exhausted) and then propose a new question.
6. Participants should not be interrupted, but the time of each response should be informally controlled to give all participants equal time to answer.
7. The moderator shall conduct the session so that the participants can share their perceptions and that they do not interrupt the responses of other participants.
8. Additional questions may be asked during the session if the moderator determines that more information is required.

Measures

The set of questions arise from the literature review on the subject and are related to the theme of this project. It should be done in the focus group context for all participants, seeking to get as much information as possible that can help better understand the context of female athletes' media coverage.

Step 3. Input data

1. Whether the session is recorded or not, the data must be entered via following link: <https://forms.office.com/e/xRDRsqG3Qk>
2. Each participant will have a specific section in the survey where their answers will be inserted, adhering to the inclusion criteria (see The Focus Group Forms).
3. Participants should not be identified nominally.
4. Knowing that the survey completion does not have a set time, this can be updated whenever new data is entered. To do so, it is necessary to submit it whenever some further information is added.
5. The answers must all be submitted in English.
6. The deadline for the data submission is 1st of May 2025.

If the session is recorded onsite or online

1. The data must be transcribed and then translated into English.
2. Then, through the link mentioned above, they must be added to the response section of the focus group participant.



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3. Only the most relevant information on the response given by the participants should be included in the survey, which may be summarised and transcribed *ipsis litteris*.
4. The data imputation officer should not interpret the responses.

If the session is not recorded onsite or online

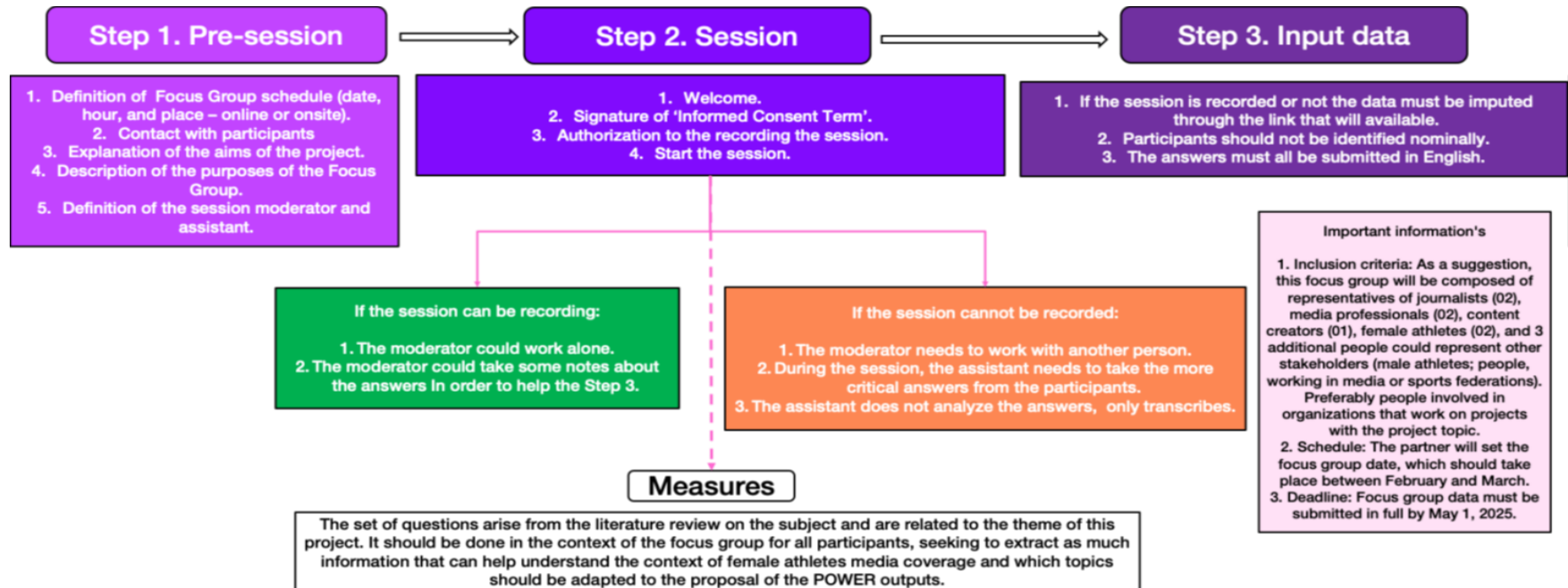
1. Responses that are recorded during the focus group by the moderator and his assistant must be transcribed for the survey in the English language (link above).
2. They must be added to the response space of each of the focus group participants.
3. Only the most relevant information on the response given by the participants should be included in the survey, which may be summarized and transcribed *ipsis litteris*.
The person entering the data should not interpret the replies.



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The Flow of the Focus Group



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3.3. Step 4: Representation of female athletes in textual, visual, and online media

Based on George et al. (2001), this step focuses on analysing how female athletes are represented in written, visual, and online media. Three studies will be conducted to examine textual content, visual elements, and online media presence, highlighting patterns and disparities in coverage from this theoretical standpoint:

Category	Positive Media Presence	Negative Media Presence
Language	Inclusive language, respectful tone, talent development	Sexist language, dismissive or biased expressions
Performance Coverage	Achievements, high performance, talent development	Trivialisation of female athletes' performances, downplaying achievements
Personal Narratives	Personal life, life lessons, inspirational stories	Failures, injuries, sanctions, framing them sensationally
Representation of Women	Leadership, breaking stereotypes, highlighting role models	Gender stereotypes, sexualisation or objectification, focus on appearance over skill

Examples

Negative examples

1. Sexist language – *“She plays well for a woman.”*
2. Trivialization of female athletes' performances – *“She won the marathon, but let's be honest, the men's race was the real competition.”*
3. Gender stereotypes – *“She balances being a top athlete with her natural role as a mother.”*



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4. Sexualization or objectification – *“She may have lost the match, but she definitely won in the looks department!”*
5. Failures – *“Typical! Women’s teams always crack under pressure in big moments.”*
6. Injuries – *“Her injury proves women’s bodies just aren’t built for intense competition.”*
7. Sanctions – *“Drama queen! She got penalized and, of course, started crying.”*
8. Downplaying achievements – *“She only won because her opponents weren’t at their best.”*

Positive examples

9. Talent development – *“She’s a rising star, showing incredible skill and dedication to the sport.”*
10. Achievements – *“She makes history as the first woman to win this prestigious title!”*
11. Personal life – *“Balancing family and elite sports, she’s proving that dedication has no limits.”*
12. Positive presence – *“Her energy on and off the field is inspiring the next generation.”*
13. High performance – *“She delivered a record-breaking performance, redefining excellence.”*
14. Leadership – *“As team captain, she leads with strength, strategy, and inspiration.”*
15. Life lesson – *“Her journey teaches us that perseverance and passion lead to success.”*
16. Inclusive language and respectful tone – *“Her skills and achievements speak for themselves—an icon in her sport.”*
17. Inspirational stories – *“From overcoming adversity to becoming a champion, her story is a testament to resilience.”*

If the language used is neutral, it can be considered positive because it avoids sexualization, stereotyping, and other biases.

In addition, this step aims to analyse specific days that were carefully selected by the researchers to ensure a balanced distribution across both months and weekdays over the entire period (each partner will complete the Calendar Tasks Days Table). It is essential to avoid influencing or controlling the research outcomes. Otherwise, the research could lose its objectivity and risk reflecting preconceived assumptions.

The analysis will not focus solely on specific press articles but on the entirety of the newspapers published on the selected days, as well as the full content of the online magazine, all X posts from the selected day, and the complete TV program. This requires a thorough review of all content and comprehensive reporting of the findings. In cases where paper editions are unavailable for past issues, their PDF versions can be used as references, along with recordings for the TV programs.



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This analysis will investigate factors such as

- Frequency and prominence of media coverage
- Themes and narratives surrounding female athletes
- Visual framing and stereotyping in images and videos

Regarding the type of sport, please note the following definitions:

“Grassroots sport” means community-based sport focused on participation and development at all levels.

“Amateur sport” means non-professional sport.

“Professional sport” means sport where athletes receive financial compensation for their performance, training, and participation.

“Olympic sports” means sports included in the Olympic Games. List of olympic sports available under following link <https://www.olympics.com/en/sports/>



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Newspaper data collection

The data should reflect the comprehensive analysis of the newspaper editions selected day. This analysis includes:

1. Data collection from reports published between 1st June 2024 and 28th February 2025, covering the critical period leading up to the Olympic Games, balanced in months and weekdays throughout this period
2. Data will be collected from the following sources in each country:
 - 4 newspapers (to be defined by partners)
 - 2 sports specific newspaper
 - 2 general newspapers
3. According to the proposal, each partner is expected to analyse:
 - The same 20 days for all 4 newspapers (if more newspapers are chosen, same 20 days for all chosen newspapers)
4. Recording detailed information, such as:
 - Weekday of the data collection and publication
 - Gender associated with the headlines
 - Number of pictures and their size (e.g. less than a quarter, quarter, half, or more than half a page)
 - Language and image categories (e.g. gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
 - Type of sports
 - Context of visual content (sports-related or other)
 - Journalist gender

To access the 'Newspaper Data Collection', you must follow this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/SPTHYpzLe2>

The deadline to submit this form is May 01, 2025.

Forms need to be filled out in English to ensure a unified analysis.



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Online sport magazine data collection

The data should reflect the comprehensive analysis of the online sport magazine editions of the selected day. This analysis includes:

1. Data collection from reports published between 1st June 2024 and 28th February 2025, covering the critical period leading up to the Olympic Games, balanced in months and weekdays throughout this period
2. Data will be collected from the following sources in each country:
 - 2 online general sport magazine (to be defined by partners)
3. According to the proposal, each partner is expected to analyse:
 - 10 days for the 2 online sport magazines
4. Recording detailed information, such as:
 - Weekday of the data collection and publication
 - Gender associated with the headlines
 - Number of pictures and their size (e.g. less than a quarter, quarter, half, or more than half a page)
 - Language and image categories (e.g. gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
 - Type of sports
 - Context of visual content (sports-related or other)
 - Journalist gender

To access the 'Sport Magazine Data Collection', you must follow this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/3LnrPwRbkr>

The deadline to submit this form is May 01, 2025.

Forms need to be filled out in English to ensure a unified analysis.



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X data collection

The data you submit should reflect the comprehensive analysis X publications of the selected day. This analysis includes:

1. Data collection from reports published between 1st June 2024 and 28th February 2025, covering the critical period leading up to the Olympic Games, balanced in months and weekdays throughout this period
2. Data will be collected from the following sources in each country:
 - Publications from 2 prominent media profiles (high prestige and number of followers, 1 general media channel, 1 sports-specific media channels)
3. According to the proposal, each partner is expected to analyse:
 - The same 30 days for the 2 profiles
4. Recording detailed information (only from the post, not the redirection link), such as:
 - Type of profile
 - Number of profile followers
 - Language and image categories (e.g., gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
 - Context of visual content (sports-related or other)

To access the 'X Data Collection', you must follow this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/3Kz7NRJSEn>

Deadline to submit this form is May 01, 2025.

Forms need to be filled out in English to ensure a unified analysis.



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TV Episode data collection

The data you submit should reflect the comprehensive analysis of the selected TV Episodes from TV popular programs. This analysis includes:

1. Data collection from episodes shared between June 1, 2024, and February 28, 2025, covering the critical period leading up to the Olympic Games, balanced in months and weekdays throughout this period
2. Recording detailed information, such as the weekday of data collection; gender associated in the news; visual content; language and image categories (e.g., gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing).
3. Data will be collected from the following sources in each country:
 - 2 general TV channels featuring 20:00 news programs or the most prominent TV news program. News available online.
4. According to the proposal, each partner is expected to analyse:
 - The same 20 days for the 2 TV channels
5. Recording detailed information, such as:
 - Type of program
 - Exposition time
 - Language and image categories (e.g., gender stereotypes, sexist language, negative or positive framing)
 - Context of visual content (sports-related or other)

To access the 'TV Episode Data Collection', you must follow this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/F0uG4PhYX0>

Deadline to submit this form is May 01, 2025.

Forms need to be filled out in English to ensure a unified analysis.



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3.4. Step 5: Perception of the portrayal of women's athletes in sports media

Study Objective

This study is part of the **POWER Project – The Portrayal of Women Athletes in Sports Media**, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The investigation replicates the conceptual framework and core procedures of Jones and Greer (2011), adapting them to the cultural and linguistic contexts of the six participating countries—Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. The objective was to analyse audience perceptions of female athletes across different sport contexts using standardised online sports news reports as stimuli, and to compare responses across countries after establishing measurement equivalence.

This study aims to analyse how the appearance (feminine or masculine) of a fictional female athlete influences:

1. public interest in the news article,
2. interest in the sport (football or volleyball), and
3. perception of the sport's gender identity (masculinity/femininity).

Participants and Context

Data were collected in six participating countries: **Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, and Spain**. Each country disseminated the study through institutional networks, social media, and partner organisations to recruit participants from the general population. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The final dataset included valid responses from all six countries, enabling cross-national analysis.

The online questionnaire includes:

- Consent form
- Manipulation check
- EQ Scale (Engagement with the article)
- Sport Involvement Scale
- Sex-typing Scale
- Demographic questions



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Procedure

The experimental design followed the structure of the reference study. For each participant, an online survey was created and hosted on a dedicated platform. The procedure involved two main steps:

1. **Stimulus Presentation** – Participants accessed a page containing a sports news article featuring a female athlete. Two sports disciplines were used: **football** and **volleyball**, each represented by a fictional female athlete adapted for the local context.
2. **Questionnaire Completion** – Immediately after reading the article, participants were directed to an online questionnaire. The survey included validated scales from the original study, measuring **interest in the story**, **interest in sport**, and **perceptions related to sexualisation and objectification**. All questionnaires were administered in **English**, the working language of the project, to maintain consistency across countries.

Experimental Conditions

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. Each condition consisted of a short online sports news story accompanied by a photograph of a female athlete. The story was identical across conditions, differing only in the sport mentioned in the headline and throughout the text. It described that the featured athlete, a standout player for her team, had recently been recognised as the top defensive player in her sport by a national-level sports association.

Each partner will receive access to four versions of a simulated news website, each featuring:

- A 200-word article about a fictional athlete named Alice
- Manipulated image (feminine or masculinized appearance)
- A sport context (football or volleyball)
- In each version is a link to the standardized Microsoft Forms questionnaire

Each participant will be exposed to only one of the following four conditions:

1. Feminine appearance + Football
2. Masculinised appearance + Football
3. Feminine appearance + Volleyball
4. Masculinised appearance + Volleyball



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Participants should:

1. Access the assigned news page
2. Read the article and view the athlete's image
3. Click on the link to the online questionnaire
4. Complete the full survey (consent + 5 blocks + demographics)

Each participant views only one version and complete the questionnaire once.

Two of the conditions depicted a female football player—representing a sport generally perceived as more masculinised—while the other two depicted a female volleyball player—representing a sport generally perceived as more feminised. For each sport, two distinct photographic portrayals of the fictional athlete were used: one emphasising a more athletic/neutral appearance, and one with a more traditionally feminine appearance. This manipulation was based solely on the photograph accompanying the story, ensuring that the textual content remained constant across all conditions.

All athlete names and biographical details were fictional and adapted to match the linguistic and cultural context of each participating country, while keeping the structure and informational content equivalent across all national samples.

Link to the news

- Volleyball with Alice 1: <https://sites.google.com/view/womaninsports-power/in%C3%ADcio>
- Volleyball with Alice 2: <https://sites.google.com/view/womaninsportspower/in%C3%ADcio>
- Football with Alice 1: <https://sites.google.com/view/womaninsports-newspaper/in%C3%ADcio>
- Football with Alice 2: <https://sites.google.com/view/womaninsportsnewspaper/in%C3%ADcio>

Measures

The instrument included:

- **Interest in the Story Scale** (12 items, with reverse-coded items appropriately inverted before analysis)
- **Interest in Sport Scale** (8 items)
- **Sex-Typing Scale** (4 items)



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Responses were recorded on Likert-type scales as in the original study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in several sequential steps:

1. **Internal Consistency** – Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated for each scale within each country, as well as for the combined dataset. Reverse-coded items were inverted prior to calculation to ensure scoring consistency.
2. **Measurement Invariance Testing** – To verify that the scales were comparable across the six participating countries, a stepwise multi-group confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed in *jamovi*:
 - **Configural invariance** – baseline model with no constraints, testing whether the same factor structure was valid across groups.
 - **Metric invariance** – factor loadings constrained to equality across groups, testing whether the constructs had the same meaning in all countries.
 - **Scalar invariance** – factor loadings and intercepts constrained to equality across groups, testing whether observed score differences reflected genuine latent differences.

Model fit was evaluated using CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR indices. Measurement invariance was considered acceptable when the changes between models met the recommended thresholds of $\Delta CFI \leq 0.01$ and $\Delta RMSEA \leq 0.015$.

3. **Final Dataset** – Only after scalar invariance was established were cross-country comparisons conducted, ensuring that any differences in scores could be interpreted as substantive rather than methodological.
4. **Comparative Analysis (MANOVA)** – Following the approach of Jones and Greer (2011), a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the final dataset to examine differences in dependent variables (interest in the story, interest in sport, and sex-typing) across experimental conditions and countries. This analysis allowed for the simultaneous assessment of main effects and interactions, providing a more robust understanding of how sport context and portrayal influenced audience perceptions.



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Partner Responsibilities

1. Ensure balanced distribution of the four-website links among participants
2. Guarantee that each participant accesses only one version
3. Validate that the article content and image match the assigned condition
4. Reach a minimum of 30 responses per condition
5. Send any questions or updates to the project coordination team
6. Finalise the data collection by the 6th of June 2025



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Appendix

Focus Group Consent Terms

Study aims

This study aims to explore perceptions of the causes and consequences of the portrayal of female athletes in sports media and its impact on their careers.

Participation in the study

- Your participation is voluntary.
- The focus group will last up to 90 minutes.
- This research complies with the Helsinki Declaration of the World Medical Association and the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA).
- You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequences or penalties.
- You may request corrections to your data at any time.
- Data handling complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679.
- The focus group may take place in person or online.
- The session may be recorded only with prior consent from participants. If recording is not authorised, interviewers will document the discussion in writing.
- Personal data will not be disclosed except as permitted under GDPR (EU) 2016/679.
- Participants retain the right to revoke their consent at any time.
- Data collection is exclusively for scientific research purposes.

Processing personal data

- All personal information collected will be anonymised and will not be disclosed to third parties.
- The data will be used solely for this research and in scientific or academic publications, where only aggregated results will be presented without identifying individual participants.
- Following data collection, researchers from the Sport Evolution Alliance, a partner in this project, will process the data.
- Data will be analysed using specialised software (Excel and SPSS), accessible only to authorised researchers.
- Each informed consent form will be assigned a unique numerical code to ensure confidentiality.



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- Data processing will strictly adhere to the European Data Privacy and Security Act (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 and any applicable data protection legislation.
- Focus group data will be securely stored for 24 months on an external hard drive with no online access, starting from the date of collection.
- Participants have the right to request a copy of their collected data in a standardised format and to demand its deletion if processing violates GDPR (EU) 2016/679.

Informed Consent Form

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided, including the study's objectives and the processing of personal data. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason and without facing any penalties. I consent to the processing of my personal data (focus group responses) for the research study described above.

If you agree to participate in this study, please indicate your informed consent by selecting the appropriate option below

(☐) Yes (☐) No

If you agree to the recording of this focus group, please indicate your consent by selecting the appropriate option below

(☐) Yes (☐) No

First name

Name

Date

The Informed Consent Form can be shared via a google form or printed.

The signature is needed if the form is shared in a printed form.

To access the online 'Consent Terms', you must follow this link:

<https://forms.office.com/e/pJfEn0G2Q3>



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