

Evaluation of Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa's National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance

DR JO CRIBB
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Executive summary

As of December 2021, 65 out of 66 qualifying partners¹ of Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa (Sport NZ), achieved a gender balance on their boards of 40 percent or more self-identified women. This was the quota set by Sport NZ as part of its National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance (the policy).

This qualitative evaluation of the implementation of the policy found that building a pool of board-ready women, focusing on supporting boards with their recruitment processes, and supporting chairs were key to success.

To achieve the quota, the attitudes and behaviours of some incumbent board members needed to be challenged, constitutions and deeds modernised, and women needed to be encouraged to apply.

The results of having more women on the qualifying boards have been an overall improvement in the quality of governance and board dynamics, more conversations about women and girls at the board table, more women in chair roles and more consideration of wider diversity opportunities, especially biculturalism.

However, such changes are not fully embedded or guaranteed sustainable, and there is no compelling evidence that the governance conversations are resulting in strategic prioritisation of women's and girls' initiatives.

To ensure the benefits of increased diversity play, active recreation, and sport sector governance are fully realised, the report recommends:

- The policy, quota and sanctions are maintained at the national level, and extended to regional and local boards within the National Sports Organisation (NSO) network
- Sport NZ provides support for boards on their bicultural journeys
- Sport NZ provides diversity and inclusion case studies, best practice examples, and tools for boards
- Sport NZ invests in training and development for current and future chairs, with a focus on inclusion, board dynamics, and leadership
- All Sport NZ investment partners through their contracts have an inclusion strategy (including targets) for their code, and are held accountable for their implementation and results
- Sport NZ pilots funded governance positions on boards²
- Sport NZ communicates its expectations clearly and consistently
- Future work is underpinned by better data collection, measurement, and evaluation.

¹ Those receiving more than \$50,000 of Sport NZ Group Funding per annum

² e.g., chief governance officer, board secretaries

Contents

Executive summary	1
Background	3
Gender quotas in sports governance	3
Sport NZ National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance.....	4
Evaluating the National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance	6
Scope of this report.....	6
Methodology	6
This report	6
Actions that worked to create gender diversity	7
Building the pool of board-ready women.....	7
Focusing on board recruitment processes.....	8
Supporting the role of chairs.....	8
Barriers to achieving gender diversity	9
Attitudes and behaviours of incumbent board members	9
Constitutions, trust deeds, and board policies and processes	9
Small, volunteer boards	9
Poor understanding of good governance	9
Women not putting themselves forward.....	9
Lack of clear messages from Sport NZ	9
The impact of greater gender diversity	10
Boards are more inclusive	10
More women as chairs.....	10
More conversations about women and girls at the board table, but this has not translated into board strategies or targets	10
More thought to wider diversity.....	11
Increase in overall governance performance	11
But change was not necessarily sustainable	11
Recommendations	12
Appendices	14

Background

Internationally women's and girls' participation in sport is increasing, but women are under-represented in leadership roles—so much so, that the United Nations issued a declaration in 1994 including a principle about increasing the number of women in decision making and leadership roles in sport at all levels.³

There is a well-accepted rationale for why women need to be included in leadership roles, including governance roles.⁴ Women bring new ideas and perspectives to decision-making that ensure better decisions are made. They can provide insights into the experiences of women and girls. If women are under-represented, women's views are unlikely to be adequately addressed.⁵

More broadly, the literature on board diversity concludes that having women appointed to boards ensures board recruitment is based on the whole pool, not just parts of it. Boards with more women attract more women employees and create policies and practices that encourage other women within the organisations and play, active recreation and sport sector (the sector). Organisations with more women on boards are more profitable and resilient.

International, national and local organisations with women well represented at governance level have been shown to make better decisions because they ensure the voices of all sport participants are included.⁶ With more women on sports boards, more gender issues are raised more often, and more boards act on gender inequality issues⁷.

Boards with three or more women are also more inclined to consider non-financial performance measures and stakeholder satisfaction, both of which are essential for the survival of sport organisations.⁸

Gender quotas in sports governance

Work in many countries at national levels and in international organisations has been undertaken for several decades to increase gender diversity. Initiatives have met with varying levels of success.

There is, however, a growing body of academic research that has identified what works to ensure gender diversity of sports governance boards. Quotas are a successful intervention, but they need sanctions to be effective. Measures that are voluntary have proven less successful. The key finding is the more ambitious the quota (accompanied by strong sanctions), the greater the change.⁹

What is also needed alongside quotas and sanctions is support for the whole board to understand biases and reasons for quotas. Work is also needed to ensure gender equality becomes an embedded organisation value.¹⁰ Board leadership roles (such as chair and portfolio leads) also need to model gender equality.¹¹

3 Brighton Declaration | IWGIWG (iwgwomenandsport.org)

4 Konrad et al (2008) The Impact of three or more women on corporate boards, *Organisational Dynamics*, 37:2, 145-164

5 Sisjord, M et al (2017) The impact of gender quotas in leadership in Norwegian organised sport, *International Journal of Sport Policy, and Politics*

6 Valiente C (2022) The Impact of gender quotas in sport management: the case of Spain, *Sport in Society*, 25:5, 1017-1034

7 Valiente C (2022) The Impact of gender quotas in sport management: the case of Spain, *Sport in Society*, 25:5, 1017-1034

8 Adriaanse J (2017) Quotas to accelerate gender equity in sport leadership: Do they work? In L J Burton and S. Leberman (eds) *Women in Sport Leadership: Research and practice for change*, 83-97

9 Sojo V et al (2016) Reporting Requirements, targets, and quotas for women in leadership, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27, 519-536

10 Adriaanse J and Schofield T (2014) The impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sports governance, *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 485-497

11 Matthews J and Piggott L (2021) Is gender on the international agenda? Female representation and policy in international sports governance, University of Chichester

The academic literature also shows there are barriers to enhancing the diversity and performance of sport governance through gender quotas. They include:

- **Attitudes of incumbent board members** such as stating that there are not enough skilled women for the roles¹², demonstrating gender blindness (through statements like, “there are no issues here, we treat everyone the same”), that women are not interested in the roles, or are too busy with their children to apply^{13 14}.
- **Backlash based on the merit principle** (“we need to appoint the best people, regardless of gender”) or that men’s rights and organisational freedoms are being threatened.¹⁵
- **Poor behaviour from incumbent men** who want to retain their roles and the perceived associated status.^{16 17}
- **Complaints about additional compliance** on already busy boards.¹⁸
- **The fear that women appointed to roles would be viewed as token**, less qualified, undermined and seen as less of a board member because they were appointed because of a quota.^{19 20 21 22}
- **That board quotas are unlikely to address issues in organisational culture**²³ and women would be expected to fit into the culture based on masculine stereotypes and attributes.²⁴
- **That boards would exclude women** for fear that, once appointed, women would have little access to participate in board decision making, especially in setting strategic direction and resource allocation (including key leadership roles on board).²⁵
- **That diverse women would not be appointed** with quotas questioned as to whether women of a similar profile (European, high income, high education, able bodied, older) would be appointed, excluding others.²⁶

Sport NZ’s National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance

Sport NZ has long recognised the importance of quality of governance, and the role women play in quality governance in the sector in Aotearoa New Zealand and has invested in a range of initiatives in support of both, especially at the national level.

This has happened within a backdrop of international expectations. In respect of women on boards, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) set the target that by 2000, 10 percent of board roles for Olympic sports should be held by women, expecting that by 2010, 20 percent of board roles would be filled by women.

In 2007, a report to New Zealand’s Olympic Committee found that only 50 percent of the boards of Olympic and Commonwealth sports met the IOC target and 22 percent had no women board members.²⁷ By 2012/13 little had changed: 39 percent of the boards of Olympic and Commonwealth sports were below the 20 percent IOC target.²⁸

High-performing boards, Sport NZ acknowledged, were diverse and the boards in which it invested generally were not. Women were underrepresented in governance and leadership roles. Work focused on improving the gender diversity began around 2012. It focused on supporting women to put themselves forward for board roles and encouraging chairs to think about diversity of their boards.

This focus on women in governance dovetailed in 2017/18 with a wider work programme developing a Women and Girls Strategy for the organisation. The new Minister of Sport and Recreation, Hon. Grant Robertson, made it clear that achieving gender diversity in the sector was his priority.

12 Claringbould I and Knoppers A (2008) Doing and Undoing Gender in Sport Governance, *Sex Roles* 58, 81-62

13 Knoppers A et al (2021) Discursive resistance to gender diversity in sport governance: sport as a unique field? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 13:3, 517-529

14 Evans A and Pfister G (2021) Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review, *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*, 56:3 317-342

15 Sojo V et al (2016) Reporting Requirements, targets, and quotas for women in leadership, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27, 519-536

16 Knoppers A et al (2021) Discursive resistance to gender diversity in sport governance: sport as a unique field? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 13:3, 517-529

17 Krook M (2016) Contesting Gender Quotas; Dynamics of resistance, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4:2, 268-283

18 Sojo V et al (2016) Reporting Requirements, targets, and quotas for women in leadership, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27, 519-536

19 Claringbould I and Knoppers A (2008) Doing and Undoing Gender in Sport Governance, *Sex Roles* 58, 81-62

20 Evans A and Pfister G (2021) Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review, *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*, 56:3 317-342

21 Krook M (2016) Contesting Gender Quotas; Dynamics of resistance, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4:2, 268-283

22 Knoppers A et al (2021) Discursive resistance to gender diversity in sport governance: sport as a unique field? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 13:3, 517-529

23 Evans A and Pfister G (2021) Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review, *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*, 56:3 317-342

24 Krook M (2016) Contesting Gender Quotas; Dynamics of resistance, *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 4:2, 268-283

25 Adriaanse J and Schofield T (2014) The impact of gender quotas on gender equality in sports governance, *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 485-497

26 Evans A and Pfister G (2021) Women in sports leadership: A systematic narrative review, *International Review of the Sociology of Sport*, 56:3 317-342

27 Cockburn R et al (2007) Gender Balance in Olympic Sports: Report to the NZ Olympic Committee

28 Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa Census of Women on Boards 2012-2013

Following his attendance at a Sport NZ board meeting in 2018, the Minister announced the intention of applying a quota to sector boards for gender diversity. That year, the New Zealand Government released its Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. Sport NZ's response to the strategy included gender diversity in governance as one of 24 actions it was committing to.

The details of the policy, including the mechanisms for penalties, and timeframes were subsequently developed and communicated as *the National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance*. By the end of 2021, Sport NZ's qualifying partner boards²⁹ were expected to have achieved a minimum of 40 percent self-identifying women on their boards or risk financial and non-financial consequences.

To support compliance, Sport NZ worked with Appoint Better Boards to identify a pool of women who had the necessary skills and experience for appointment to their sector boards. They created a pool of 200 board-ready women applicants.

Sport NZ also contracted an Appoint Better Boards consultant to support boards with their recruitment processes. The boards that took up this offer were supported to create high-quality position descriptions and diverse appointment panels to remove bias and barriers to women being appointed. Those who have taken up this development opportunity have noted an improvement in their recruitment processes.

Sport NZ continued to support boards to work through their Governance Mark Programme which includes board recruitment and developing skills matrices.

In December 2021, Sport NZ proudly announced that 65 out of 66 qualifying partners had achieved the quota and the only non-compliant partner had a plan in place to achieve it.

A detailed timeline of the implementation of the policy is included as Appendix 1.

“ We needed this quota to smash through the barriers and disrupt the status quo. ”

²⁹ Those organisations receiving more than \$50,000 per annum of Sport NZ Group Investment

Evaluating the National Policy for Gender Equity in Governance

Scope of this report

With all Sport NZ's qualifying partners, bar one, achieving the gender quota in the required timeframe, Sport NZ is interested in understanding the impact of the quota and increased gender diversity on these boards, and what the next steps might be to enhance the capability of sector governance.

Sport NZ is specifically interested in understanding more about:

- What actions were effective in creating change in gender diversity?
- What barriers did boards face implementing the quota requirement?
- What impact has the requirement had on board performance? How inclusive are boards?
- What impact has the requirement had on gender equity?
- What impact has the requirement had on board considerations of broader diversity?

These questions form the basis of this report.

Methodology

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed using insights from the literature and key Sport NZ programme staff (Appendix 2).

Interview participants were selected because they had a specific perspective on the implementation of the policy. They were a mix of National Sports Organisations (NSOs), Regional Sports Trusts (RSTs), and disability sector chairs and board members, women appointed through the targeted recruitment process to Qualifying Partner boards, and Sport NZ staff and advisors who supported boards to meet their quotas.

A wide call for volunteers to be interviewed was made. Of the 35 approached, 27 responded and were interviewed in July and August 2022. Their interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes. Anonymity was assured and all material presented is done so without reference to individuals or their organisations.

The data from interviews was then analysed for key themes and insights. These themes were then sense checked for completeness and accuracy with participants at Sport NZ's Sector Chairs Group meeting on 31 August 2022 (Appendix 3).

This report

The findings are presented thematically in the following sections:

- Actions that worked to create gender diversity
- Barriers to achieving gender diversity
- The impact of greater gender diversity
- Recommendations



More women (on the board) have resulted in a different tone to board meetings.”

Actions that worked to create gender diversity

Some boards needed to take no actions to achieve the gender diversity quota. Most others needed to create a plan to achieve the quota and were able to do so. Eleven boards (17 percent) received specialist recruitment support via investment from Sport NZ to achieve the quota.

Through the interviews, the following key actions were identified that supported boards to achieve their quotas.

Building the pool of board-ready women

Early on Sport NZ recognised that the problem of few women on sector boards was not a 'supply' issue; there were many women with the skills and experience necessary for appointment to these boards.

It was instead a 'demand' issue. Boards were not reaching potential women applicants, were not attractive to them or, if they applied, were not appointing them. Observations from those who were interviewed were that sector boards judged women candidates more harshly than male candidates, and often reverted to appointing the candidates they felt most comfortable with (and, as such, not women).

By advertising for women candidates for the women in the play, active recreation and sport governance pool, Sport NZ, working with Appoint Better Boards, was able to attract more than 200 board-ready women who were willing to be appointed to sector boards, at both national and regional levels. Being part of the pool gave women confidence that their applications would be taken seriously and provided a foil to any boards who said there were not good candidates for their vacancies.

Each woman appointed to a board was widely celebrated, creating visibility of women as directors on sector boards and as such encouraging more women, especially Māori and Pasifika women, to put themselves forward for board roles.

Women who were appointed through Appoint Better Board's programme appreciated the professionalism of the recruitment process and the candidate support they received throughout the process.

Timeline

- February 2012**
- Targeted monitoring of 72 boards commences
 - Pool of women board members

- 2015-2017**
- 20 more project

- 2018**
- Target announced

- 2020**
- Policy consultation
 - Board approved change to policy (women only)³⁰

- 2021**
- Policy change consultation
 - Refreshed pool of women
 - Board approval - final policy published

- December 2021**
- Consequences for non-compliance agreed
 - Final date for compliance

³⁰ Originally a minimum of 40% self-identified men and 40% self-identified women until legal clarification that it could be challenging to argue men required positive discrimination for governance roles in the sector in New Zealand.

Focusing on board recruitment processes

The most common response from those interviewed as to what made the most impact on achieving the gender quota was the focus on the recruitment process. Previously many boards rushed their appointment processes, giving little thought to the skills needed and board composition. They relied on shoulder tapping potential board members through current board members' personal networks. The focus of recruitment was on finding candidates who knew about the sports (usually because they had played them to a representative level) and/or had deep experience in the sector, and those with a narrow range of technical skills (like accountancy or law).

The mainly incumbent men were recruiting new members from their mainly male networks. To ensure gender diversity, there needed to be a 'circuit-breaker' in board recruitment processes.

After the policy was announced, qualifying partners were able to take up Sport NZ's offer of access to the services of a professional board recruiter. A number of boards also had constitutional provisions for a Sport NZ nominated independent governance consultant on their recruitment panels.

Many boards formalised and improved their recruitment processes by:

- developing a skills matrix, including the need for diverse experiences, and using them to guide their recruitment process
- advertising widely, including encouraging women to apply
- drafting fuller job descriptions that outlined the role, context, expectations, time commitment and challenges of their organisations
- using a recruitment panel to undertake the interview and selection process
- ensuring the recruitment panel was diverse, including having independent members
- using standard questions to treat all candidates fairly.

If board members were selected through member elections, some NSO boards ensured their members understood the importance of board composition and gender diversity and encouraged them to vote accordingly. One NSO board used a selection panel process for its elected members to ensure the right calibre and diversity of candidates.

Supporting the role of chairs

In boards that were slow to move, the reason was often linked to inertia from their chairs. Sport NZ would communicate via the chairs and some board members wondered how much of the guidance on the policy was being passed on to board members.

The leadership and focus of the chair determined how quickly the board moved towards the quota, and how inclusive meetings were. Some chairs were thought unable to relate easily to women board members and did not have the skills to work with a diverse board. As a result, these boards were characterised by conflict, poor discussion, and poor decision making.

Supporting chairs, through the Sector chairs Group was seen as critical to ensuring ongoing gender diversity and good governance on boards.

Barriers to achieving gender diversity

There were several barriers to achieving the quotas identified by those interviewed.

Attitudes and behaviours of incumbent board members

Those interviewed identified a series of attitudes among incumbent board members, including a resistance to the gender quota on the basis that there were not enough skilled and/or experienced women to be appointed and that any appointments should be on merit and the best person. Some incumbent board members were displeased with the thought of losing their board roles, particularly if their roles were seen as reward for years of service. By creating a pool of highly qualified and experienced board-ready women, these criticisms of the policy quota diminished.

Some women reported that the board cultures they had experienced before the policy quota were like exclusive 'boys' clubs'. Women board members were patronised, talked over, given no airtime, had information withheld from them and any requests or questions they asked were ignored.

However, with more women appointed in more numbers to each board, there was no evidence from those interviewed that these behaviours and attitudes currently prevail.

Constitutions, trust deeds and board policies and processes

The timing of elections and board terms meant that some boards could not achieve the quota in the normal cycle of appointments and had to plan for shortened terms to create vacancies for new appointments.

For others, their constitutions or deeds had narrowly prescribed requirements about the appointment of board members, particularly regarding the election of member representatives in NSOs. Such constitutions privileged those who had served at club and regional levels and were well known but did not necessarily consider governance skills in the election processes.

Few constitutions for organisations created by the amalgamation of men's and women's associations allowed for a gender-balanced board composition, often meaning women's voices were lost from their sporting code at the governance level. Other constitutions and deeds included unrealistic expectations of recruitment processes that meant good processes were difficult to run.

As a result, several boards changed their constitutions and deeds to allow them to appoint a diverse and skill-based board more easily.

Board policies and processes around meeting times were also identified as a barrier. Some boards rigidly held to board meetings at times that excluded women board members with childcare responsibilities.

Small, volunteer boards

For smaller organisations, and some regional and local sector boards, just achieving a quorum for a board meeting is an achievement. For these boards, attracting a skilled and diverse pool of candidates for their board vacancies is a challenge as they recruit from a small pool of willing volunteers. These board roles may also be less attractive as they often come with expectations of being engaged in the ongoing day to day delivery of the sport.

Poor understanding of good governance

Those attracted to governance roles often are so because of their passion for the sector, organisations and/or sport. As a result, boards may have few board members with governance experience or an understanding of the governance role. In NSO boards, many rely on their own experience as players to make decisions and focus on operations and delivery. As such, recruitment will be focused on finding ex-players with the shared passion for the sport, and exclude many competent potential board members in the process.

While every board needs to have some members with 'lived experience', such experience can also be historical and outdated. The best boards have board members who share an affinity for the organisation while bringing a diverse range of skills and perspectives to their governance role.

Women not putting themselves forward

Given the prospect of facing an appointment to a mostly male board, in some instances few women put themselves forward. The board roles were not viewed as attractive. Creating a pool of board-ready women helped to give women confidence in applying for and putting themselves forward for positions.

Lack of clear messages from Sport NZ

Many felt the implementation of the policy would have been improved if the messaging from Sport NZ had been consistent and clearer. Chairs have many interactions with different divisions of Sport NZ and felt they received inconsistent messages. The details of the policy were also unclear.

Some also thought communication of the policy would have been improved if there had been more information about the rationale for the policy—knowing the reasons for gender diversity on boards was important.

The impact of greater gender diversity

Sixty-five out of 66 Sport NZ’s qualifying partner boards had achieved 40 percent gender diversity by December 2021. Most needed to appoint more women to their boards to achieve their quota. The impact of this increase in the number of women on these boards is discussed in this section.

Boards are more inclusive

While women can be appointed to boards, research shows that they can be excluded from board work. They can be undermined, undervalued, given few opportunities to contribute, excluded from conversations and information and not appointed to leadership roles within boards (such as the chair or chair of board sub committees).

Those interviewed shared no evidence of women currently being excluded from board work. However, inappropriate behaviours towards women board members have occurred in the past and it cannot be guaranteed that it no longer occurs.

Most women appointed through the policy have remained in their roles suggesting that boards are more welcoming of their contribution. The nearly full retention of women board members is a positive sign.

However, many boards have had to meet on-line due to COVID-19 and this has made it more difficult to ensure board dynamics are positive and that there are strong, trusted relationships between board members.

More women as chairs

Sport NZ data shows that across all qualifying partner boards 32 percent have women chairs (38 percent chair NSOs and 7 percent chair RSTs). Overall and anecdotally, this is an impressive increase, although the data and trends have not been formally collected.

As the saying goes ‘you can’t be what you can’t see’. Having women in visible leadership roles in the sector is critical to encouraging participation at all levels, including at decision-making tables.

However, as there is limited succession planning within boards, and some boards lack transparency on chair succession (such as doing deals as to who will be the next chair outside board meetings), ensuring chairs are diverse will need ongoing monitoring and attention.

More conversations about women and girls at the board table, but this has not translated into board strategies or targets

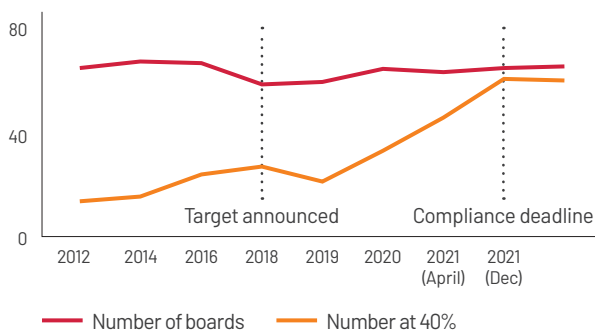
The research shows that women board members raise issues that men do not consider, especially issues such as barriers to women’s and girls’ participation in sport. There is evidence that this has occurred as the number of women on boards has increased. Conversations about well-being and participation at the community level are also thought to be more prevalent.

However, discussion about women and girls’ participation has not translated into strategies or targets for most boards. The benefits of having a diverse and inclusive board should be seen in strategies, targets, policies, and budgets that are also inclusive and recognise diversity.

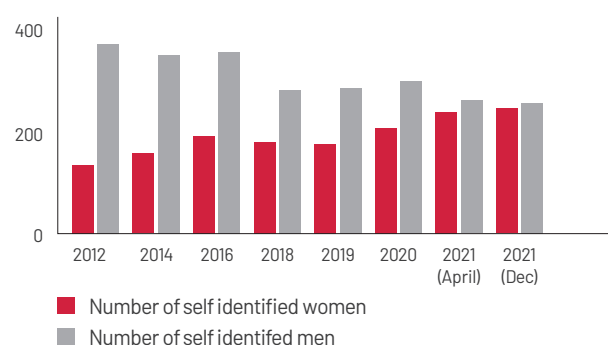
While management may be delivering programmes supporting and encouraging the participation of women and girls, the increased number of women on boards has not universally translated into more strategies and targets at the board level. Indeed, one person interviewed observed that when COVID-19 hit and funding pressures resulted, women’s and girls’ programmes and spending on women athletes were cut first.

Having more women on boards has also not translated into leadership in gender diversity within the wider sector, particularly NSOs. Many interviewed pointed out that they have few levers to control what happens at regional or club level. The few who are actively promoting gender diversity are using the levers they have such as selection processes for national development programmes, funding, and role modelling positive behaviours.

Number of boards and number at 40%



Number of self-identified women and men



More thought to wider diversity

Many boards are now thinking proactively about their next steps about board composition, especially the importance of ensuring they have board members who bring perspectives from Māori and Pasifika communities.

A number are initiating Te Tiriti o Waitangi and bicultural reviews and want to develop policies within their organisations and at board level. Most are at an early stage, with some grappling with how to get started.

In some boards, LGBTQ+ issues are discussed but usually only if there is a board member who champions LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Disability matters are not widely considered by most boards.

Some boards have thought about the importance of input from young people. Some have player, and young people advisory groups, feeding insights into board agendas. There are some successful examples of boards appointing emerging or future directors.

Increase in overall governance performance

As a result of the focus on board composition, skills-based appointments, and board recruitment processes, many interviewed concluded that the result has been an increase in the overall quality of governance.

Boards have better discussions and make better decisions

Some of those interviewed observed that board discussions were broader, more in-depth and more thoughtful, that there was more challenge and debate and, as a result, boards were making better decisions.

Increased quality of governance processes

Sport NZ's focus on recruitment meant most boards instigated more formal recruitment processes than they had previously. Boards moved from only shoulder-tapping among their networks to advertising and using recruitment panels for selection. Many included independent members on their recruitment panels.

Boards were also prompted to think about their induction processes and succession planning and to think strategically about challenges coming up and the skills they needed around their board tables. For a number this resulted in modernising of their constitutions and deeds, which again had the overall impact of increasing the quality of governance processes.

Most intend to keep using the recruitment processes they had put in place, including advertising widely for vacancies, and having diverse recruitment panels and skill-based appointments.

More skilled directors appointed

Some interviewed observed that the calibre of women appointed under the policy was high and, as a result, they had more skilled directors on their boards. The focus on creating a pool of board-ready women, increasing the use of skills matrices, having thorough recruitment processes, and in NSOs, more thoughtful election processes has resulted in more skilled directors being appointed.

More connections to members

Some NSO interviewees observed that because of the need to appoint women to achieve the quota they needed to communicate with their members more as the AGM and election processes were critical to achieving the quota. This meant the quality and frequency of board engagement with members increased, something that proved valuable and has been maintained.

But change was not necessarily sustainable

It is too early to say whether the change in gender diversity and inclusive boards is sustainable.

For some, diversity is part of their tikanga, so their board composition and board culture reflect this. For others, changes have been made to enable increased board diversity, such as changes in constitutions and deeds to enable a wider pool of applicants.

There are positive signs that gender diversity will be maintained. There are many supportive chairs. The performance of women appointed to boards has dismissed prejudices about the quota. There is evidence that boards will continue to use more formal recruitment processes (advertising widely and recruitment panels). Many board members have acknowledged that increasing the gender diversity of their boards has created positive change.

However, there is limited succession planning. The pipeline of those willing to be appointed may be shrinking as board work takes more time, and the complexity of roles increases as do the risks. With fewer candidates overall, there will likely be fewer women candidates applying and being appointed.

Likewise, chairs change, board members change, recruitment practices can fall back to shoulder tapping, and board diversity can be unwound quickly.

Most interviewed concluded that the gender diversity of sector boards needed more time to mature to ensure it was embedded and the benefits were fully realised.

Recommendations

Based on the insights gained from this review, the following are recommendations for Sport New Zealand to consider:

Maintain policy, quota, and sanctions

Some boards achieved their gender diversity quota only recently. For others, the benefits of having a gender-diverse board have not yet been fully realised. Slippage is possible. As such, it is recommended that Sport NZ maintain the current policy settings.

Support for the policy, quota and sanctions should also remain, including the pool of board-ready women, with a specific focus on ensuring a strong pipeline of Māori, Pasifika, and women from other ethnic backgrounds.

Roll out the expectations of the Policy to regions and clubs

The policy includes the expectation that within NSOs the quotas will be rolled out over time to regions and clubs. There are many opportunities to enhance gender diversity within regions and clubs—to enhance women's and girls' participation at regional and local levels and the visibility of women in leadership and governance roles.

Achieving gender diversity should be easier for larger regional boards and larger clubs, but they will need support to do so, including advice on recruitment processes and access to the pool.

Smaller regions and clubs may struggle to achieve gender diversity on their boards. They are volunteer boards, often performing committee and operational functions, rather than governance and have a small pool of willing volunteers to draw from. Elections may be uncontested as few put themselves forward. Thought will need to be given to how to best support them, including thinking through broader issues of how codes are structured.

Provide support for boards for their Te Tiriti and bicultural journeys

Many interviewed are interested in starting or have started their journeys towards biculturalism. They see it as the next step in their evolution as boards. To support boards to do this, Sport NZ should provide a range of resources, and opportunities to share the approaches being taken.

Boards would appreciate having tools to analyse their bicultural maturity (self-assessment tools) as well as guidance, case studies and frameworks. Sport NZ may wish to consider funding Te Tiriti and bi-cultural training for boards and expert support for the development of strategies. Indeed, Sport NZ may also wish to share its own bi-cultural journey with the sector.

The Governance Mark and other Sport NZ governance development opportunities need to have a stronger focus on biculturalism. Including chief executives and management teams will also be important to ensure progress across the sector.

Provide case studies, best practice examples and diversity and inclusion tools for boards

Some boards are looking to improve their diversity and inclusion practices and, as such, are keen to learn from the experiences of other boards, and to know what is considered best practice. Sport NZ should provide some case studies of initiatives that have worked well, syntheses of best practice, and practical tools to support boards to become more diverse and inclusive.

Provide training and development for chairs on inclusive leadership

The chair has been identified as critical to not only how diverse and inclusive a board is, but also how well it performs its governance functions. The way meetings are structured and facilitated has a direct correlation to the quality of decisions a board makes. Chairs also set the tone of their boards and are key to upholding values and behaviours. They also have a critical role in ensuring board conversations and decisions are focused on strategy, not operational detail.

Chairing a board where members have a range of views, where ideas are regularly contested and where decisions are made following rigorous debate is a specific skill and takes experience and practice.

Investing in the development of chairs, and their skills in facilitating meetings, is critical to ensuring gender diversity is embedded, board cultures are inclusive, and the overall effectiveness of board performance grows.

Given the time commitment involved in chairing a sector board, Sport NZ may also like to revise its investment policies on board member remuneration to allow boards the choice of paying stipends to chairs (and other board roles) should they wish to. Payment provides some recognition of the importance, complexity and time commitment of the role. Some boards may choose to do so, others may not.

Expect boards to have inclusion targets and an inclusion strategy

The literature shows that one of the impacts of having more women on boards is that boards become more focused on gender issues, in particular the participation of women and girls. This does not yet seem to have occurred for most interviewed. As such, the benefits of having a gender-diverse board, have not been fully realised, in terms of outcomes for women and girls.

To ensure the benefits of gender diversity are fully realised, boards should be expected, as part of their contract with Sport NZ, to set targets and strategies for inclusion and participation. They should be held accountable for delivering against those targets and strategies.

While acknowledging that many have women's and girls' programmes at the operational level, boards should have visions and targets for inclusive participation and use the targets to inform their board work including budget setting and policy development.

The benefits of having a diverse and inclusive board lie in their having strategies, targets, policies, and budgets that are also inclusive and recognise diversity.

Pilot funding of key governance positions

Sport NZ could pilot fund a pool of board secretaries and support chief governance officers roles within boards and across regions and clubs.

A pool of experienced board secretaries could support boards with their governance processes, such as through organising recruitment processes, helping chairs put together effective agendas and taking good minutes and supporting subcommittee work. A board secretary could work with several boards at any one time, supporting chairs and boards to use volunteer board members' time most effectively and ensuring board processes are good practice.

Likewise, Sport NZ could promote the role of chief governance officer³¹ within boards, supporting the chair to oversee the mechanics of good governance including recruitment, policy review and chief executive performance processes.

Both would help embed good governance processes and practices, including diversity and inclusion. They would also support boards to be strategic, rather than operationally focused.

Underpin the next steps with clear communication, measurement, and evaluation

Enabling visibility of women as directors on sector boards encourages other women, especially Māori and Pasifika women, to put themselves forward for board roles. Sport NZ should consider an integrated communications programme that highlights individual and collective experiences and successes.

In addition, to ensure boards are well informed and supported, Sport NZ needs to ensure its communication is consistent and clear, in relation to timeframes and outcomes sought.

To monitor progress, more data and measurement are needed, as is ongoing evaluation of what is effective.



There are more complex and nuanced discussions, more thoughtful debate, a stronger people and player focus. ”

31 [Chief governance officer - Wikipedia](#)

Appendix 1: Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa women in governance implementation timeline

February 2012–July 2018		
Targeted monitoring and support for 72 boards to voluntarily address gender inequity in governance including annual audits.	Sport NZ Women in Governance Mentoring Programme (2015–2017)	
	Sport NZ Women in Governance Talent Pool (first build)	
	Women in Governance Training Scholarship (2015–2017)	
	20 more project ³²	
	Women in Governance Special Interest Group	
	Adhoc chair mentoring	
	Sponsorship of Governance NZ and Women on Boards Awards (Emerging Director)	
	Nine Steps to Effective Governance and related tools, documents, and templates	
July 2018		
Sport NZ announcement of governance policy – a minimum of 40% self-identified women and 40% self-identified men on boards ³³	Case studies, support for elected members and regional recruitment pilots	Quarterly check-in for compliance and support ³⁴
		Bespoke board recruitment support
2019	Case studies, support for elected members and regional recruitment pilots	Bespoke board recruitment support
		Development of formal policy
2020	Case studies, support for elected members and regional recruitment pilots	Progress audit
		Bespoke board recruitment support
		Policy consultation
		Quarterly and annual audits ³⁵
		Board approved change to policy
2021	Case studies, support for elected members and regional recruitment pilots	Bespoke board recruitment support
SNZ policy change – a minimum of 40% self-identified women		Policy change consultation ³⁶
		Refreshed Sport NZ pool
		Audit May 2021
		Board approval final policy published
		Audit November 2021
		Monitoring and support for those still not compliant
December 2021	Case studies, support for elected members and regional recruitment pilots	Final outcome confirmed
		Board approved consequences for non-compliance (financial)
		Final date for compliance ³⁷

32 Sport NZ and Appoint Better Boards Av, 40% women on 72 identified boards by June 2019

33 Minimum 40% self-identified women and minimum 40% self-identified men by 31 December 2021 on all boards receiving more than \$50,000 per annum of Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa Group funding

34 Led by Partner Managers in discussion with CEOs of Qualifying Partner boards

35 Via Partner Manager quarterly partner meetings with CEOs & annual self-reporting audit of all mandated boards from 2019

36 From a minimum of 40% self-identified women and men to women only to comply with anti-discrimination legislation

37 65/66 boards compliant

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

1) Introduction

- Tell me about your role, why you are involved, what you aim to achieve being on the board

2) Your board's experience of gender diversity

- What is current board composition?
- How did you achieve this composition? What steps did you take to meet Sport NZ's requirements for gender balance? What worked? What didn't work?
- What would you do differently, with the value of hindsight?

3) Sustainability

- What are and have been the views around your board about gender diversity and Sport NZ's requirements?
- What do you / board members understand as the rationale for the requirements?
- What measures did you put in place (other than quota requirement) to ensure gender equality?
- What board policies and practices are in place to ensure ongoing value of gender diversity is maximised? How will you sustain your compliance with the requirement?

4) Barriers

- What were the key barriers you faced in meeting Sport NZ's requirements?
- How did you overcome them?
- What (if any) resistance did you encounter? From whom? How did you overcome it?
- What (if any) barriers do you see in the future maintaining your board gender diversity?

5) Impact of increased board gender diversity

- What (if any) positive impacts has increasing gender diversity of your board had? On your board and its performance?
- What (if any) negative impacts has increasing gender diversity of your board had?

6) Board dynamics

- Who holds positions of responsibility on your board (i.e., chair)? How are these roles selected?
- Reflect on previous board meetings, who speaks the most, the least?
- Who is most influential in strategic discussions? Resource allocation / budget setting?
- What attributes of your fellow board colleagues are most valued by you? Why?
- How often are gender issues raised at a board meeting? By whom? With what result?

7) Board recruitment

- What processes do you use to recruit new board members? How (if at all) have your recruitment practices changed over time?

8) Wider network leadership

- What are the barriers (if any) to women and girls participating in your sport? And being part of decision-making in your sport?
- What plans (if any) are in place for women and girls in your sport? How are these plans championed and resourced? By whom?

9) Wider diversity

- Gender is only one dimension of diversity. How does your board ensure it reflects the diversity of all players?
- What do you see as the impact of this focus / work on your sport?

Appendix 3: Participant organisations

Organisation

Appoint Better Boards
 Archery NZ
 Boardworks Aotearoa
 Buddle Finlay
 Governance consultant
 New Zealand Cricket
 Northern Regional Football
 NZ Rugby
 Paralympics NZ
 Rowing NZ
 NZ Rugby League
 Special Olympics NZ
 Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa
 Sport Otago
 Sport Waikato
 Squash NZ
 Surfing NZ
 Waka Ama NZ

Sector Chairs Group Hui

Organisation

Active Southland
 Aktive Auckland
 Athletics NZ
 Badminton NZ
 Basketball NZ
 Bowls NZ
 Cricket NZ
 Equestrian NZ
 Girl Guiding NZ
 Halberg Foundation
 Hockey NZ
 Netball NZ
 Nuku Ora
 NZ Football
 NZ Golf
 NZ Pony Club
 NZ Rugby League
 Paralympics NZ
 Rowing NZ
 Special Olympics NZ
 Sport Gisborne Tairāwhiti
 Sport Hawke's Bay
 Sport Manawatū
 Sport Northland
 Sport NZ Ihi Aotearoa
 Sport Otago
 Sport Taranaki
 Sport Tasman
 Sport Waikato
 Squash NZ
 Surf Life Saving NZ
 Swimming NZ
 Table Tennis NZ
 Tennis NZ
 Touch NZ
 Volleyball NZ
 Yachting NZ



Level 1, Harbour City Centre
29 Brandon Street
Wellington 6011, New Zealand
PO Box 2251 Wellington 6140
Phone: +64 4 472 8058
sportnz.org.nz

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government