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Analysis of career pathways of British postholders in international sport governance

Interim Report
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KEY DEFINITIONS

Junior position in international sport: A subordinate role to the senior decision-makers of the organisation, such as being a chair or member of a committee, commission or working group.

Senior position in international sport: A decision-making role such as a president, vice-president, secretary-general, or member of an executive board.

1. INTRODUCTION

There continues to be a significant underrepresentation of women within decision-making positions in international sport organisations (Adriaanse, 2016, 2019; Adriaanse & Claringbould, 2016; Henry & Robinson, 2010; Matthews & Piggott, 2021; Schoch & Clausen, 2019). Since the first research studies about gender exclusion and inclusion appeared in the 1980s (Theberge, 1984; White & Brackenridge, 1985), a growing body of knowledge has developed to try to explain the continual lack of significant change in gender ratios in sport leadership and governance positions. Findings have revealed barriers, obstacles, and processes that lead to the exclusion of women, such as the preference for men as leaders, the use of male-oriented selection procedures, the prevalence of sexist acts and talk in sport departments and organisations, and the seeming incompatibility between motherhood and a career in sport administration (Burton, 2015; Evans & Pfister, 2021).

Few studies have focused on the backgrounds, career paths, and experiences of individual sport leaders. Studies that have adopted this focus have been positioned at the national level, and have found that male and female leaders are influenced by gender-specific experiences, attitudes, and evaluations, and that gender-related issues with power, prestige, and conflict are common reasons for individuals to leave national sport leadership positions (e.g., Pfister & Radtke, 2006, 2009).

As far as we are aware, there is no existing research exploring the gendered experiences of individuals progressing from national to international sport governance. Instead, the focus has been *either* at the national *or* international level. Drawing on existing research, it is recognised that female candidates and postholders likely face additional barriers that may affect their ability or willingness to put themselves forward for election or appointment, their rate of election success, their ability to influence change or form key relationships within their organisation, and their enjoyment and sense of achievement within their roles.

This report presents findings from the first phase of a mixed method project. The research objective for this phase was to survey all UK postholders within international sport organisations and collect and analyse data about their demographics, backgrounds, career pathways, and leadership experiences. The findings presented in this report provide an overview of the social characteristics of UK postholders in international sport organisations and identify social groups that are underrepresented amongst this group of leaders. Additionally, (gendered) trends are identified in relation to the career pathways of British postholders, both in terms of the influence of sporting and non-sporting roles/sectors on their current post-holding. Furthermore, the experiences, perceptions, facilitators, and challenges of British postholders are discussed from a gender lens, highlighting examples of both gendered and non-gendered findings.

The findings from this initial part of the project will inform the focus and sample for the second, qualitative phase of the research. This second phase will provide an in-depth exploration of the career pathways of British postholders in international sport governance, including an examination of gendered differences, intersectional barriers, and factors for

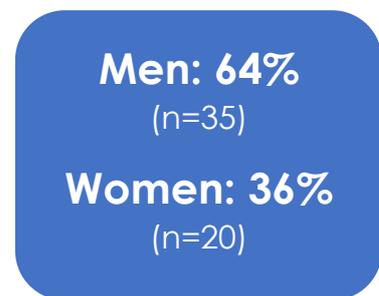
success. Importantly, the findings will also be used to inform applied practice in the sector to improve gender equality and ensure that female candidates have the same opportunities to positively impact the international sporting system as their male colleagues.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research sample

The research sample for this phase of the project was drawn from a database maintained by UK Sport that keeps a record of all British individuals serving as president, an executive board member, and/or a member of a committee of international federations (IFs) and European federations (EFs) for Olympic or Paralympic sports where the respective UK national governing body (NGB) is receiving World Class Programme or Progression funding from UK Sport. As such, this database is solely comprised of sports that UK Sport invests in.

In total, 136 individuals who hold senior and junior positions in international sport were emailed the weblink for the online survey. Fifty-five people responded, meaning a response rate of 40%. Just under two-thirds of the respondents were men (n=35; 64%) and just over one-third were women (n=20; 36%). No respondent answered 'non-binary/gender-fluid', 'other', or 'prefer not to say'.



2.2. Data collection process

The survey was administered and analysed using Jisc software. A draft of the survey was created with feedback and input from UK Sport. The opening pages of the survey included an overview of the project and a consent form for ethical purposes. Thereafter, the survey was split into three sections and comprised multi-choice and open-answer responses:

1. *The demographics section* included questions on the participants' age, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, family/caring responsibilities, race/ethnicity, impairment/disability, religion or belief, geographic location (area of the UK), employment status, current occupation sector, and highest educational qualification. The purpose of this section was to provide an overview of the social characteristics of UK postholders in international sport governance and identify social groups that are underrepresented amongst this group of leaders.
2. *The career pathway section* encouraged respondents to detail their current leadership role(s) and responsibilities, previous sport leadership roles and responsibilities, and previous non-sporting professional roles and responsibilities that were most influential in helping them to obtain their current position. This aimed to highlight common trends in the routes that individuals take to get to leadership positions, including any potential gendered impacts.
3. *The leadership experience section* asked questions on the extent to which participants feel qualified, valued, and supported in their role, their career aspirations, barriers to their progression, challenges they have overcome, and ways they could be better supported in their international sport leadership journey. This

was to enable a critical analysis of the impact of gender norms and expectations, and organisational power dynamics, policies and procedures on the leadership experiences and opportunities of these individuals.

The survey went live in June 2022 and reminders were circulated by UK Sport in July 2022 to encourage completion. The survey closed at the end of August 2022.

2.3. Data analysis

Data were downloaded from JISC into a master spreadsheet and analysis was split into four parts. For some of the analysis, cross-tabulations were performed using the JISC software.

Firstly, a descriptive analysis of the social characteristics from section one of the survey was undertaken. Data were subsequently cross tabulated according to whether the respondent occupied a senior or junior position and, separately, by their gender. This analysis identified underrepresented social groups amongst the sample.

Secondly, a descriptive analysis of the responses to the multi-choice questions in sections two and three of the survey was conducted via comparisons between genders, a cross-tabulation of gender and position, and a cross-tabulation of gender and notable characteristics that had arisen in the first phase of analysis such as ethnicity, disability, age, and sexuality.

Thirdly, the qualitative responses to questions in section three were split according to gender and thematically coded. The codes were then analysed to explore (gendered) trends and anomalies in the experiences, perceptions, facilitators, and barriers of British postholders in international sport.

Finally, an analysis of responses to questions asking about the career pathways of the respondents was undertaken. Each answer was chronologically ordered before a descriptive analysis was undertaken of the type and level of roles occupied within and outside of sport. (Gendered) trends in career pathways were then identified and discussed.

3. FINDINGS

We present our findings according to the following sections:

- Sample characteristics/demographics
- Inclusivity in international sport governance
- Career pathways
- Obtaining an international post
- Making an impact
- Challenges faced
- Support received
- Learnings and advice for future leaders

3.1. Sample characteristics/demographics

There is a lack of diversity amongst the sample of British postholders in international sport. Figure 1 demonstrates the dominance of certain characteristics amongst the sample whilst indicating differences between men and women.

The dominant descriptors include most of the sample being White British (96%; n=48), non-disabled (91%; n=50) and heterosexual (87%; n=48). Regarding ethnicity, this finding mirrors insights provided by an analysis of boards of UK Sport and Sport England-funded bodies in 2019 (Sport England & UK Sport, 2019). Thus, it is not surprising that a lack of ethnic diversity at national level extends to international sport governance. The report also states that 13% of the UK population are from diverse minority ethnic communities, meaning that British postholders of senior governance positions within international sport are not representative of the British population. However, the picture is different for sexuality. With nine per cent of our sample identifying they were LGBT+¹, this is significantly higher than the British average of two per cent and the three per cent of national board members (UK Sport/Sporting England, 2019).

For other characteristics, many have an undergraduate degree or higher (80%; n=44), are married (71%; n=39), are aged 55 years or older (62%; n=34), and do not have caring/parental responsibilities (60%; n=33). Over half of the sample (56%; n=31) have competed in sport at international or Olympic/Paralympic levels. A small majority responded that they were Christian (56%; n=31) over having no religion (40%; n=22). Nearly half of the sample (45%; n=25) reside in the South-East or London, and 38% work full-time (n=21) compared to 35% who are retired (n=19). Of those who work, they predominantly do so in a sporting occupation (59%; n=16).

¹ Two respondents (four per cent) answered 'prefer not to say'.

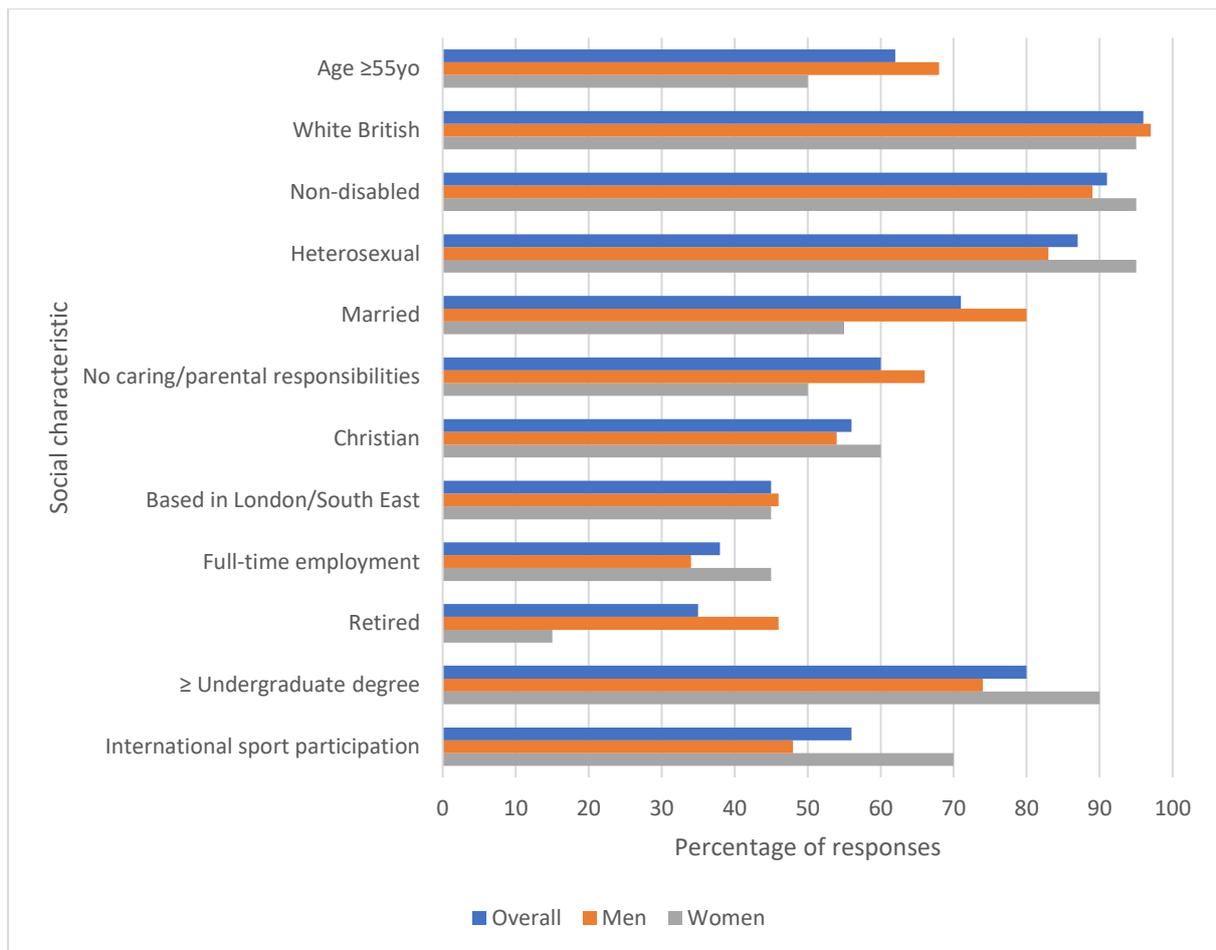


Figure 1. Social characteristics of the sample by gender (%)

When the analysis of social characteristics is split **by gender**, differences can be noted from Figure 1. Men in the sample were older; over half (68%; n=24) were fifty-five years and older compared to half of the women (50%; n=10). Moreover, most men in the sample were married (80%; n=28) compared to just over half of the women (55%; n=11). Interestingly, there is more diversity in the responses to sexuality amongst men than women. Seventeen per cent (n=6) of men in the sample are asexual, bisexual, gay, or preferred not to say. Only one woman stated she was not heterosexual. More women were educated to a higher level than men: 96% (n=18) of women have an undergraduate degree or higher, whereas 72% (n=26) of men have the same. Women also competed at a higher sporting level, with 70% (n=14) competing at international or Olympic/Paralympic levels compared to 48% (n=16) of men. This aligns with findings from previous research that has found that women must be more qualified or experienced than male counterparts to be positioned as equal in their competence and suitability for sport leadership and governance roles (Piggott, 2019). When it came to caring and parental responsibilities, 45% (n=9) of women had either parental or caring responsibilities compared to 34% (n=12) of men. Only one person in the sample, a woman, had both parental and caring responsibilities. A greater prevalence of men (46%; n=16) are retired than women (15%; n=3), though 25% (n=5) of women are self-employed compared to no men.

There were no significant differences in ethnicity between the genders, perhaps mostly due to such an overall underrepresentation of ethnic minorities. Finally, whilst men and

women predominantly resided in London and the South-East, elsewhere, there was a greater geographic spread amongst men than women.

Figure 2 indicates that the social characteristics of the sample do not significantly differ when analysed **by senior or junior position**². Across the sample, 21 individuals (38%) hold senior positions, including President, Vice-President, Secretary-General, and Chair/member of a Council or Board³. Thirty-four individuals (62%) hold junior positions, such as being a Chair or member of a committee only.

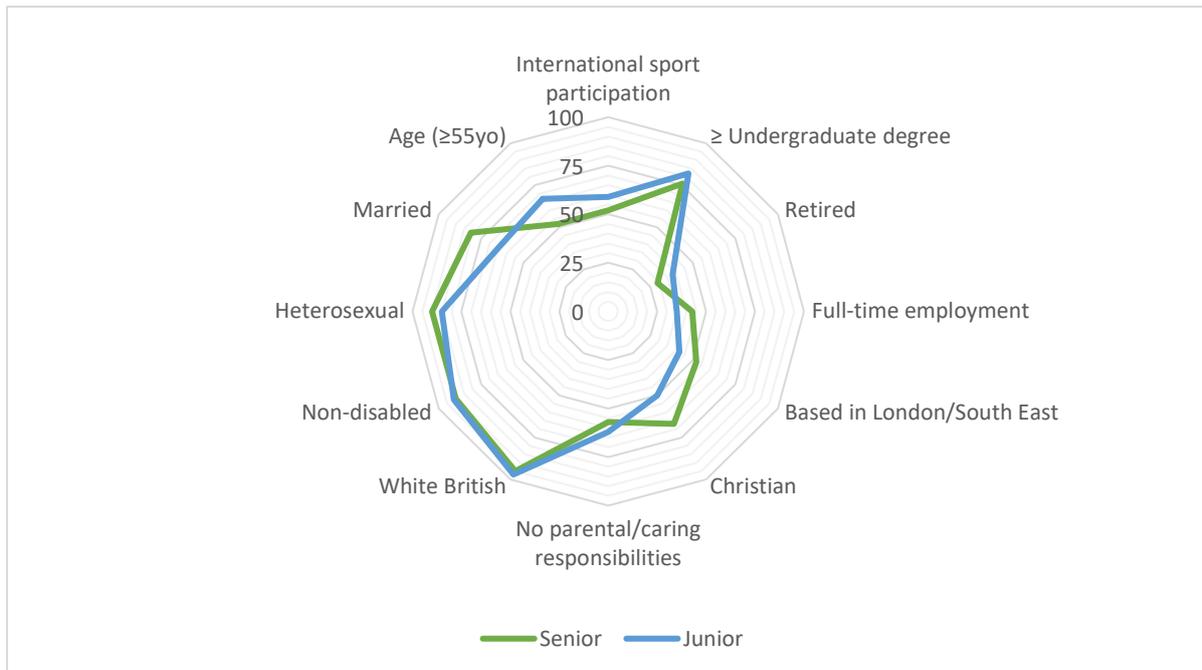


Figure 2. Percentage of social characteristics of the sample by position (%)

The most significant differences occur between age, marriage, religion, and employment. Over half of those in senior positions (52%; n=11) were aged 55 years or older compared to two-thirds of those in junior positions (67%; n=23). Eighty-one per cent (n=17) of those in senior positions were married compared to 67% (n=22) of those in junior positions. Those in senior positions (67%; n=14) stated they were Christian more than those in junior positions (50%; n=17). For employment, more of those in senior positions were in full-time employment (43%; n=9) compared to retirement (29%; n=6). In contrast, more of those in junior positions were retired (38%; n=13) compared to full-time employment (35%; n=12). This data indicates that those in junior positions are older and have more flexibility with their time. This finding is somewhat surprising given the significant time commitment required for senior roles.

Analysis **by gender and position** reveals men (40%; n=14) in our sample frequent senior positions slightly more than women (35%; n=7). It is worth noting that there are differences in the roles of these positions. Men in the sample (n=7) occupied the roles of President, Vice-President, and Secretary General whereas just one woman stated she was a Vice-

² Six individuals answered that they hold a position at European level. Their data is included in analysis.

³ Some of these individuals may also hold membership or be a Chair of a committee.

President. Everyone else in a senior position was a member of a Board or Council. This reflects previous research that has found vertical gender segregation to exist in international sport organisations: the higher the level/seniority of role, the fewer the women (Matthews & Piggott, 2021).

For junior roles, there are slightly more women (65%; n=13) than men (60%; n=21). Importantly, however, men sit on a greater number of committees than women whilst dominating certain types of committees. For example, men vastly outnumber women on Classification or Rules (10 men to 2 women), Events (7 to 3), Technical (9 to 2) and Umpiring/Referee/Officials (8 to 1) committees. Research has demonstrated how women may occupy roles on committees considered as 'soft', such as those focusing on sport development, child safety, and equity, whereas men occupy roles on 'harder' committees, such as performance-related roles and roles related to the management of sport organisations (Velija, Ratna, & Flintoff, 2014). This demonstrates assumed natural differences between men and women.

The uniformity of British postholders seen in this sample is problematic for the future of sport. As discussed in equality, diversity, and inclusion debates more broadly in sport, a lack of diversity limits the experiences and knowledge that can benefit the governance and development of sport. The debates also work to encourage organisations to be reflective of informal and formal discrimination, processes, and practices of subordination. The promotion of equality and equity as democratic principles, particularly within Europe and more recently by the International Olympic Committee (2022), have worked to encourage sport organisations to avoid gender underrepresentation and prevent democratic deficit within the organisation (Elling, Hovden, & Knoppers, 2019). However, it is also important to be aware of potential pitfalls when promoting an inclusive agenda, including tokenism of those elected via gendered governance actions such as quotas (Pfister, 2010), a lack of ownership over the promotion of the agenda (Sotiriadou & de Haan, 2019), and varying motivations of international sport organisations to comply with such attempts (Geerart, 2019).

3.2. Inclusivity in international sport governance

One of the most definitive findings from this research can be seen in responses on how inclusive international sport governance is to all. Figure 3 shows that over half of the sample (56%; n=31) responded that it is not inclusive enough. There were no significant differences in responses by gender here, given that 57% of men and 55% of women believe it is not inclusive enough. This finding is important when taken in context of the research sample and how section 3.1 identified the lack of diversity across the respondents. It appears that many of these individuals acknowledge issues with the uniformity that dominates international sport governance and recognise that their identities are privileged within an exclusive system. Indeed, men in senior roles (72%) and women in junior roles (70%) answered most negatively (not inclusive enough; not at all). Senior women (57%) were the only group whereby over half of the responses were positive. This could be influenced by the positionality of these women being success stories within the international sport system to have reached such senior posts. Younger women (<55 years old) were most vocal when it came to stating ‘not inclusive enough’ (80%; n=8), with older men (≥55 years or older; 63%; n=21) not too far behind. When cross-tabulated against other social characteristics, there is no evidence to suggest that a minority group overwhelmingly feels that international sport governance is not inclusive.

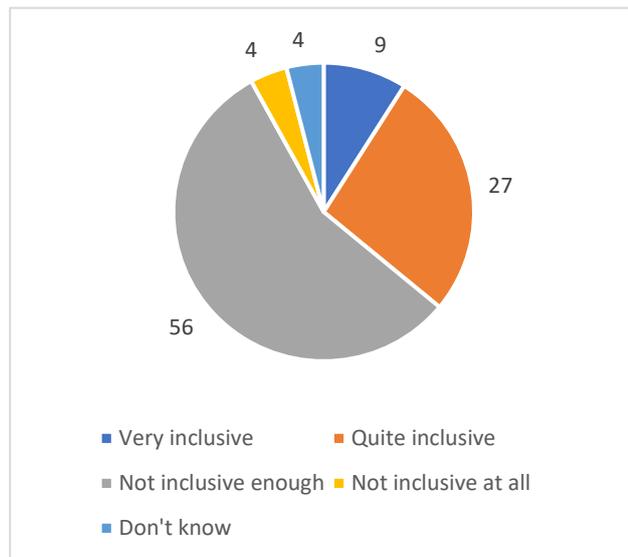


Figure 3. The extent to which international sport governance is inclusive to all (%).

Most of the qualitative responses mirrored the quantitative findings in acknowledging that international sport governance requires progress to be more diverse:

“It is still very white, western, male dominated. There is a need to increase the pool of available talent from other groups.” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“International sports governance is still a predominantly male environment. Within the top level of the organisation I am involved in, there are only two women ... of 19.” (Female respondent, Junior Positions)

It is clear that there is an awareness of the issue of exclusive international sport governance amongst those working in the sector. Previous research has found that paradoxical practices can exist within sport organisations where both men and women agree that the skewed gender ratio of leadership positions needs to change, but also construct gender as either irrelevant or non-existent (Claringbould & Knoppers, 2012). It is important, then, that postholders in international sport governance refrain from simply recognising the issue, but also feel motivated and empowered to take action to address the issue.

There was significant diversity in the factors reported as contributing to a lack of inclusivity. These ranged across:

- **Structural factors:** E.g., the need for strategies and initiatives such as quotas and term limits, the need for a more diverse pipeline, a lack of governance support for IFs, biased recruitment practices, a lack of understanding of top-down governance practices, and limited positions providing limited opportunities for change.
- **Cultural factors:** E.g., regional/cultural differences and a need to better understand these, the existence of old boys' clubs, IFs failing to recognise the value of diversity, traditional ways of working, and an overall lack of inclusive culture.
- **Individual factors:** E.g., the need to better support diverse and minority individuals financially and developmentally to progress into leadership positions.

The reporting of this diverse range of factors highlights the complexity of the issue and differences in opinions on how best to resolve the issue from those involved in international sport governance.

Whilst only mentioned by two individuals (one man and one woman), an important observation was that some organisations are performing well in some areas of diversity (e.g., geographic and cultural diversity) but not in other areas (e.g., female and para representation). A better understanding is needed on whether this is a trend across IFs where certain social groups face more severe underrepresentation than others. The demographic statistics presented in Section 3.1. demonstrate the severe underrepresentation of some groups within our sample; notably people from diverse minority ethnic communities and disabled people.

There were two notable gender differences in responses related to inclusivity. First, the only positive comments in relation to progress towards inclusivity were reported by men:

“Work is underway to increase participation of women and minority groups.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

“Issues such as gender balance are now coming to the fore and debate is opening regarding how to ensure Boards (and sub-committees) are skilled, agile and progressive - aligned to strategies that can support them moving in that direction.” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

Second, several of the male respondents (n=5) discussed the need for more education and training, whereas none of the women did. All bar one of these responses focused on education and training for women and other underrepresented groups, e.g.:

“By encouraging and supporting younger, talented sports administrators or former athletes from a range of backgrounds to get involved and help shape the direction of international sports bodies. They will need support, and development opportunities, to help ensure success in these roles.” (Male respondent, Senior Positions)

“Sport must pursue an agenda of gender equality and cultural diversity, however not rely on this approach as a box ticking exercise - education so roles and positions can be filled by those people with knowledge is essential.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

These quotes demonstrate an emphasis on the need to go beyond tick-boxing exercises to ensure that affirmative action approaches (e.g., gender or diversity quotas) result in the election of *qualified* diverse candidates. Whilst an important factor, it is also crucial that international sport governance does not adopt a ‘fix the women’ framework that can lead to these individuals having to prove themselves more or engage in more training or development than men to change perceived weaknesses or deficits (Shaw & Frisby, 2006). Such a framework positions women and other underrepresented groups as the ‘problem’ rather than the structure and culture of sport organisations themselves.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Track wider diversity amongst British international postholders to monitor broader inclusivity issues.
2. Explore ways in which education and development can go beyond ‘fixing the woman’ and have a greater organisational focus. This could include the identification and development of one or more individuals (e.g., ‘gender equity champions’) within each organisation who hold influential positions and can identify and advocate for talented prospective female candidates.

3.3. Career pathways

Respondents were asked to provide information on their current post(s) in international sport, before listing up to seven previous posts in **international, continental, and/or national sport** that had been most influential in helping them to obtain their current position(s). They were also asked to state how many years they were in each role and their age when they obtained the role. Data were problematic given the varying level of detail provided by respondents. As a result, it was not possible to provide a clear and consistent picture of the career pathways of the entire sample. Therefore, an overview is provided of an analysis of the available data. The interview phase of the research can explore these journeys in more detail.

From the available data, it appears that people serving in a decision-making or administration capacity at a national level form the pipeline for international governance. This finding is unsurprising yet highlights the importance of continued inclusion and diversity work at the national level. Thirty-eight people (69%) stated they had national-level experience, with two-thirds (68%) of these noting their experience was in a senior position.

Twenty respondents (36%) said they had continental-level experience and half of these were in a senior position. Fourteen people (25%) in the sample had both national-level and continental-level experience, whereas 18 people (33%) skipped a continental role and moved from a national role to an international role. As a result, it is clear that there are multiple routes into international sport governance. A processual direction from national to continental and then international level is no guarantee of securing a role. Finally, 12 people (22%*) only provided information about international level experience⁴. Some provided multiple roles at this level, many of which were their current roles, whereas some only provided one role and gave no other history.

Table 1. Most influential roles in helping respondents to obtain their current position by gender.

Role	Men		Women	
	n	%	n	%
National	23	66	15	75
National (senior position)	19	54	7	35
Continental	10	29	10	50
Continental (senior position)	5	14	5	25
Both national and continental	6	17	8	40
Skipped continental	11	36*	7	39*
International-only	9	29*	3	17*

⁴ Any percentages marked with an asterisk (*) are calculated according to a sample size of 49 rather than 55 owing to the reduction of people who stated their current role was at continental-level (n=6).

Table 1 shows, by gender, the respondents' most influential roles in helping them to obtain their current position. Women identified a greater prevalence of national experience (75%) than men (66%) and continental experience (50%) than men (29%). Further, more women had both national and continental experience than men, but the number who reported skipping from national to international was very similar. More men (29%) stated they only had experience of an international role than women (17%). As such, this data indicates that women identified a more processual journey of influential roles that helped them to obtain their current position, whereas men pointed to positions of particular significance. More detail on gendered trends to do with experience and achievements is provided in section 3.5.

On average, men in the sample were 46 years old when they achieved their first post in international sport governance whereas women were slightly younger at 44 years old. This somewhat counters conventional wisdom that women are older than men as they progress to more senior roles in international sport governance, often owing to career breaks and/or having children.

Finally, almost the entirety of the sample only had experience of one sport, including its parasport version. It was rare to see someone with a variety of sports in their career journey. This indicates the insular nature of international sport governance whilst further acknowledging the importance of networking to learn of other experiences and ways of working. Section 3.4 onwards will highlight the significance of networking in this research.

Respondents were also asked about any roles **outside of sport** that were influential in helping them to obtain their current post. The sample responded very evenly here, with twenty-eight (51%) stating they did, whereas twenty-seven (49%) answered that their role outside sport had no influence on gaining their international role. The gender split was also near-identical. Thus, having a professional background can help but is not a requirement. Men mentioned a broader array of professions, including legal, marketing, defence, technology, management, and retail. Women stated medicine, healthcare, law, pharmaceuticals, and IT and consultancy. In some cases, it appears that the individual has directly achieved an international/continental role due to their relevant professional background. For example, a man answered that he was a member of a legal commission for an international sport organisation yet had no other experience within sport governance but was a Director of Legal Services for a not-for-profit organisation. Another example is of a woman who has an extensive history in medicine but her only stated sport governance experience was as a board member of an international sport organisation.

3.4. Obtaining an international post

The survey data suggests that women and men *become aware of their first post in international sport* in different ways. Men appear to benefit more from existing networks (whether that be from the IF, other existing networks, or being already aware of the post) whilst women are more supported by their NGB. Generally, this is repeated when asked what *the influential factors are in obtaining their first international role*. Men identified networking skills and IF support whereas women highlighted their experience, motivation, and achievements. This is further evidenced when analysed by position and age.

Figure 4 shows how the sample **became aware of their first post** in international sport. Respondents could select more than one answer, thus figure 4 indicates the percentage of the sample to select that answer as well as the percentage by gender. Accordingly, there are some differences in the responses by gender.

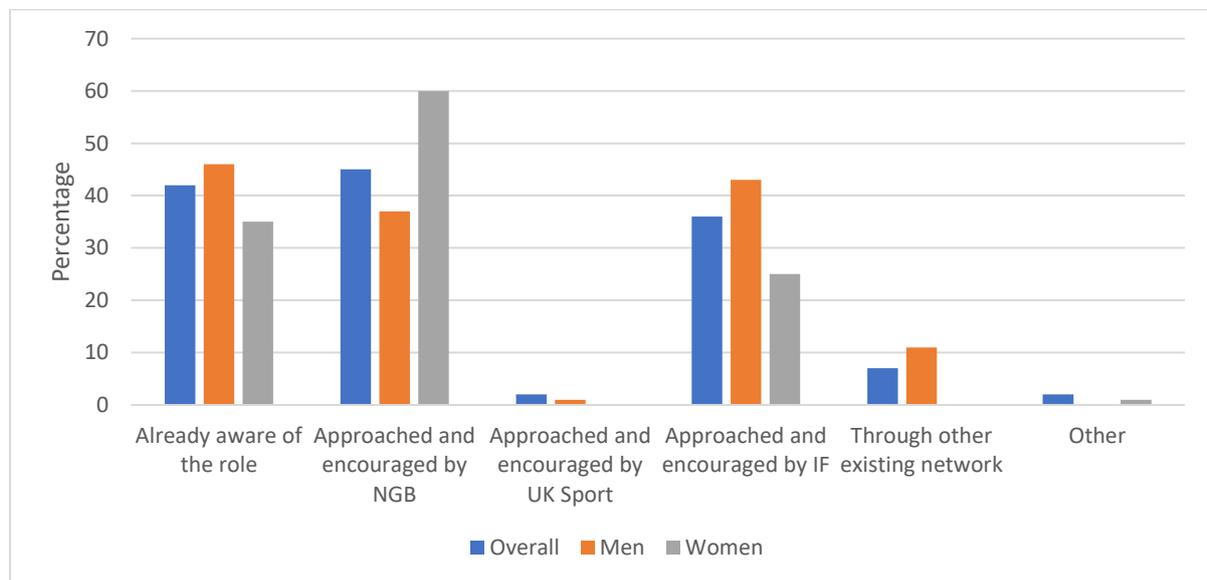


Figure 4. Percentage of responses overall and by gender for how the sample became aware of their first post in international sport.

Nearly half (45%) of the sample stated that they were approached and encouraged by their NGB. However, women amplify this total given that 60% selected this option compared to 37% of men. Indeed, when analyses were conducted via gender and position, it was noticeable that the group with the highest response rate in stating that they were approached and encouraged by their NGB were women in junior positions (77%; n=10). This may indicate the impact of the emergence of leadership and governance pipelines being developed for women in sport, as women are identified and put forward for such opportunities by their NGB.

The opposite occurs for those approached and encouraged by their IF. Overall, the total was 36%, yet a higher proportion of men (43%) selected this option than women (25%). This finding further supports the development of strategies such as internal ‘gender equity champions’ to increase IF support for the recruitment of talented women. Men also benefitted from other networks. Nearly half of men (46%) said they were already aware of the role compared to just over a third of women (35%). Moreover, 11% of men had heard

through other existing networks compared to no women. Thus, the significance of networking in becoming aware of an international post should not be underestimated.

Figure 5 demonstrates the **key factors that were instrumental for the sample obtaining their first post in international sport**. As with the previous topic, respondents could select more than one answer.

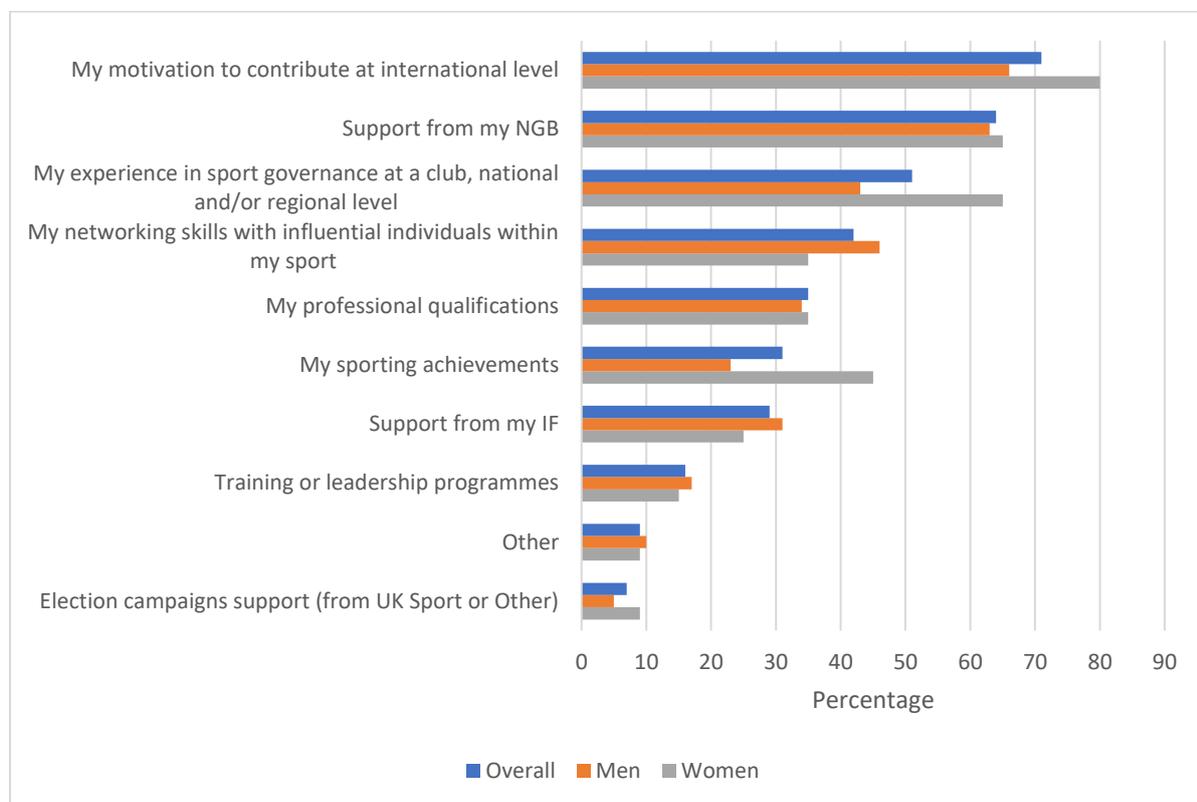


Figure 5. Percentage of responses overall and by gender for key factors that were instrumental for the sample obtaining their first post in international sport.

The most frequent response across all respondents was their motivation to contribute at an international level (71%). Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents selected support from their NGB, demonstrating the key role these organisations have in nurturing colleagues into the international arena. Experience of sport governance below international level was seen as instrumental by just over half of the sample (51%). Networking skills (42%), professional qualifications (35%), sporting achievements (31%) and support from their IF (29%) followed thereafter. Fewer responses were seen for training or leadership programmes (16%) and election campaign support (7%).

Figure 5 also shows some important gendered differences in the responses. Women acknowledged their motivation to contribute to international level more than men (80% women compared to 66% men). The same occurred with their experience of sport governance below international level (women: 65%; men: 43%) and sporting achievements (women: 45%; men: 23%). However, men identified networking skills (46%; women: 35%) and support from their IF (31%; women: 25%) more than women. This is significant because of the established role of networking in advancing opportunities for individuals, predominantly men, to ascend and succeed in sport governance (Piggott, 2021). This data is also important because women note their sporting achievements to a greater extent

than men, indicating that this form of legitimacy in international sport governance is becoming more equitable for women given the continued advancement of women in sport.

Analysis also demonstrated significant differences in the responses between women in senior and junior positions. Women in junior positions reported the influence of networking skills (46%) and sporting achievements (54%) to a much greater extent than women in senior positions (networking: 14%; sporting achievements: 29%). In contrast, women in senior positions selected support from their IF much more than women in junior positions (57% compared to 8%). This indicates that instrumental factors shift as women progress within international sport governance and that support is not only required by NGBs and IFs in obtaining international positions, but also in transitioning from junior to senior roles. There were fewer notable differences for men of different positions.

The figures between men and women in senior positions are quite similar aside from networking skills (men: 43%; women: 14%) and support from their IF (men: 29%; women: 57%), once again demonstrating the significance of networking for men. At junior level, women identify motivation (85%; men: 71%), experience in sport governance (69%; men: 43%) and sporting achievements (54%; men: 29%) differently to men. In contrast, men in junior positions identify support from their IF (33%) more so than women in junior positions (8%).

Finally, analyses with other social characteristics point to younger women (<54 years old) identifying support from their NGB (70%) more than younger men (46%) and for sporting achievements too (40% to 18%). However, younger men identified networking skills more (46% to 30%). Older women (≥55 years and older), more than older men, identified experience (90% to 46%), motivation (80% to 67%), and sporting achievements (50% to 25%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Create a bank/dataset of identified forthcoming opportunities in international sport governance (e.g., end-of-terms for positions and committee membership) with a mechanism to circulate and promote these to individuals who have indicated an interest in such positions.
4. Review what support NGBs and IFs are providing to those transitioning (or wishing to transition) into international sport governance and identify and share best practice.
5. Review the support offered to individuals advancing from junior to senior roles in international sport organisations.
6. Provide more (diverse) networking opportunities for prospective and current women leaders that can support them in obtaining international roles and developing from junior to senior positions.

3.5. Making an impact

There was generally a positive sense that respondents can make an impact/difference in their current leadership role in international sport, including those who have the most marginalised demographics in the sample. As per figure 6, over half of the respondents (56%; n=31) felt they could make a strong impact and nearly a quarter (24%; n=13) felt they could make quite an impact. Thirteen per cent (n=7) said they make a little impact and just two per cent (n=1) said they make no impact at all.

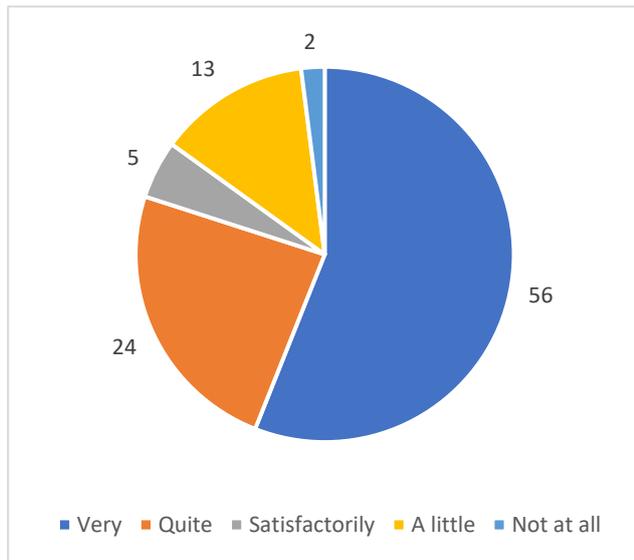


Figure 6. The extent that respondents feel they can make an impact/difference in their current leadership role in international sport (percentage).

Those in senior positions responded more positively ('very' or 'quite': 86%) than those in junior positions (76%). This is likely due to the increased decision-making power of those in senior positions. Negative responses were predominantly provided by older men, though the positive responses were broadly shared across both genders. Older women (≥55 years and older) felt they could make more of an impact than younger women.

From the open-ended survey responses, some gendered trends emerged regarding factors that influence the extent to which respondents feel able to make an impact/difference in international sport. Male respondents had a notable tendency to report factors related to individual competencies, such as experience, achievements/qualifications, and knowledge. For example, 13 men (37%) spoke of their previous experience being an influential factor in making an impact compared to just one woman (5%):

“My external experience in leadership has given me additional responsibility in IF commissions, currently Brand, TV and marketing so extending my influence in the arena.” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“My broad experience in business and sport gives me the knowledge and ability to make a meaningful contribution quickly and effectively.” (Male respondent, Senior Positions)

Instead, women had a greater tendency to report factors external to their individual competence. For example, the two most prevalently reported factors by women in being able to make an impact were holding an influential decision-making role or being on an influential committee (n=4) or establishing networks and relationships (n=4):

“I believe that the network of individuals across international posts are critical to gaining support and momentum for change.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“After close to 10 years working in international sport politics, I have built good relations with my fellow board/council members” (Female respondent, Senior Positions)

Male respondents also reported influential roles and committees to be an important factor (n=11), but no men discussed the importance of networks and relationships.

These findings suggests that female respondents hold their individual skills or competence in lower regard than men in terms of their success or influence in international sport governance. This could align with findings from previous research that has found that women’s skills, knowledge, and competencies are not valued as highly as men’s (Piggott, 2019), and so women have to rely on external factors and relationships to gain influence. It could also align with previous research that has found that women’s lack of self-confidence in their own ability to lead and influence can negatively influence female application rates for leadership positions (e.g., Aman, Yusof, Ismail, & Razali, 2018).

Lack of seniority/formal power was the most stated negative contributor to influence for both men and women. This highlights the importance of the level of the role in the extent to which an individual can have influence. Therefore, it is important that there is diversity across the most senior levels of international sport governance to ensure it is not just Western, White men who have ultimate decision-making influence and power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Develop strategies to nurture the self-confidence of prospective and current women postholders.

3.6. Challenges faced

Both female and male postholders reported a diversity of different challenges faced in their international sport governance careers. Again, these ranged across:

- **Structural factors:** E.g., politics, power conflicts, volunteer structure, working conditions/workload, financial costs, lack of support, Covid-19, term limits, and poor management/leadership.
- **Cultural factors:** E.g., navigating cultural differences, networking, marginalisation, abuse/harassment.
- **Individual factors:** E.g., maintaining motivation, lack of self-confidence, and developing skills and knowledge.

Responses from male postholders were a lot more varied than responses from female postholders, with only a few challenges reported more than once. Where responses were reported more than once by male respondents, they all related to the organisation, the role itself, or external factors: politics (n=12), work conditions/workload (n=4), Covid-19 (n=2), and term limits (n=2). This suggests that the majority of male postholders in international sport do not encounter challenges related to their social position (e.g., gender, race, sexuality, etc), but more related to structural or organisational factors that affect all employees. This is perhaps not surprising given the dominance of white, heterosexual, non-disabled men in our sample. One man did report abuse/harassment and it is notable that this individual identified as a gay man:

“Personal abuse/harassment from other international delegates ... Regrettably you learn to live with it.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

It was also notable that a significant proportion of male respondents reported politics as a challenge (n=12; 34%) compared to just one woman (5%):

“Politics and lack of leadership vision in NGB, looking after those based on relationships rather than the future opportunities.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Position)

“Keeping out of politics while driving sport forward through sensible rule changes. Congress just supports what they think president wants to get more money.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

Nine out of the 13 respondents (69%) who reported politics as a challenge said that it was an ongoing issue and had not been overcome. The high frequency of politics being reported as an issue and its continuous nature highlights the need for more work to be done in making international sport governance more transparent, ethical, and integrous. Research within the field of political science has found a strong association between the share of women elected to office and lower levels of perceived corruption (e.g., Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, 2019). Therefore, male dominance within the sector is likely to have an influence on problematic politics, and in turn increasing female representation is likely to positively influence a reduction in problematic politics and corruption within the sector.

Most responses from female postholders were reported on more than one occasion and, proportionally, significantly more responses were related to their positionality/social position and individual challenges, e.g.: marginalisation (n=4), male dominance (n=2), lack

of self-confidence (n=2), and discrimination/abuse/harassment (n=1). It is particularly noticeable that several women spoke of being disadvantaged because of their gender:

“At our last meeting I was addressed by an international male colleague inappropriately, in an undermining and patronising way. This was tactical on their part due to their position and done to show the room that he could put in my place, however it caught me off guard and I didn't know how I should/could respond - This shouldn't be tolerated at any level.”
(Female respondent, Junior Position)

“Being ... female. You have to work hard to earn respect of some men from other nations.”
(Female respondent, Junior Position)

No men spoke of gender-related issues. This suggests that international sport governance continues to be associated with dominant men and masculinity, which can lead to the positioning of women and minorities as incongruent with the requirements for success in decision-making roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

When discussing strategies for overcoming marginalisation and discrimination, it is notable that (where a response was provided) all the female postholders discussed individual-led strategies: determination/perseverance (n=2), developing relationships (n=1), qualifications (n=1), training (n=1), developing experience (n=1), demonstrating value (n=1), and hard work (n=1):

“The only way to overcome is to show you can do it. Sometimes I have to do things under the radar or bully my way in” (Female respondent, Junior Positions)

“Getting a qualification. Doing UK Sport ILP. Using examples from outside my IF or even my sport to show I know what I am talking about!” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

This indicates that women place the burden on themselves to change a culture of gender discrimination rather than the system and culture of sport governance. This places significant burden on individual women leaders and raises the question as to how many women fail to apply or drop-out because this burden is too great.

Other challenges presented by more than one woman were: establishing trust/respect and relationships (n=3), poor leadership (n=2), lack of self-confidence (n=2), managing workload (n=2), lack of support from IF/NGB (n=2), and financial costs (n=2). Of these, a lack of self-confidence and financial challenges were two challenges that were *not* also reported by male respondents. As discussed above, previous research has also found that women leaders tend to have lower self-confidence than male counterparts. In terms of financial challenges, at the national level in the UK, it has been found that there continues to be a gender pay gap across both national sport councils and national governing bodies (Velija, 2022). Eight out of the 16 employed women in our sample (50%) work in the sport sector, so the ongoing gender pay gap in the UK sport sector could be a factor in affordability of women giving up unpaid time to voluntarily work in international sport governance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Provide greater support to international sport organisations to identify and overcome problematic politics and corruption within their organisations.
9. Provide reasonable financial support to reduce financial barriers for prospective and current female postholders, e.g., support with travel expenses.
10. Develop formal reporting processes for abuse and discrimination experienced by those working in sport administration and governance. This can provide a safe space for these individuals to gain support, as well as develop greater insight into the extent to which this is an institutionalised issue across the sector, and in turn inform how UK Sport can address such issues with international sport organisations.

3.7. Support received

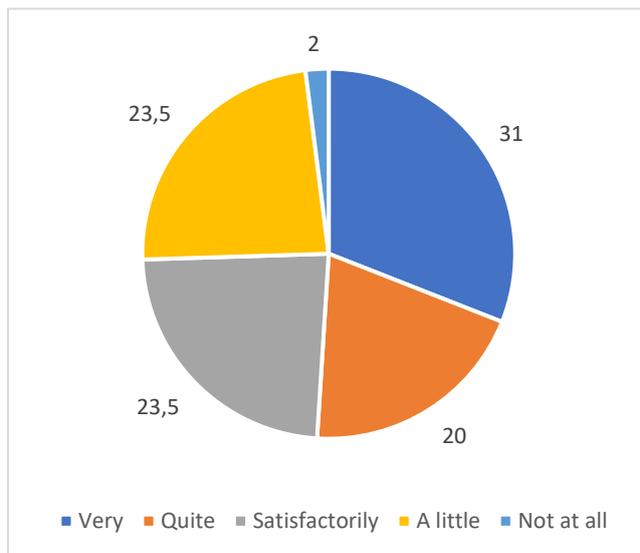


Figure 7. The extent that respondents feel supported in their current role in international sport (percentage).

There was a mixed picture when it came to the extent that respondents feel supported in their current role in international sport. Just over half of the sample (51%; n=28) responded positively here, as per figure 7. This was mirrored when analysed by gender, with near identical results provided per answer by men and women.

It appears that seniority of position and age are important to consider here. Men and women in senior positions feel more supported than their counterparts in junior positions. Indeed, less than half of those in junior positions (47%) felt ‘very’ or ‘quite’ supported. Moreover, older men and women (≥55 years and older) felt significantly more supported than their younger peers. This could, in part,

be a result of leadership programmes and other support strategies tending to focus on those in senior roles. Thus, more support is needed for younger individuals and those in junior positions.

Three of the four disabled respondents answered ‘satisfactorily’, with the remaining other selecting ‘not at all’. Of the seven non-heterosexual respondents, three felt they were quite supported, three felt satisfactorily supported, and one a little. However, these individuals’ subsequent qualitative responses offered little more explanation other than the level of support provided to their organisation. Generally, this data indicates that minority groups require more support.

From qualitative responses there were few noticeable gendered trends when discussing positive and negative factors related to support. Table 2 outlines the most commonly mentioned forms of support by both women and men.

The prevalence of these sources and forms of support varied greatly across respondents and their different organisational affiliations. This highlights the need for different sources and forms of support to be available to all prospective and current senior international postholders regardless of their organisation and social background.

Table 2. Most prevalent sources and types of support experienced by British postholders

Source of support	N	Type of support	N
NGBs	15	General	10
		Working group	2
		Election	1
		Increasing influence	1
		Leadership development	1

INTERIM REPORT: ANALYSIS OF CAREER PATHWAYS OF BRITISH POSTHOLDERS IN INTERNATIONAL SPORT GOVERNANCE

UK Sport	7	Financial	3
		Leadership development	2
		Networking	1
		General	1
IFs	2	General	1
		Providing support staff	1
Colleague and networks	6	General	3
		Advice	3
Senior figures/leaders	2	General	2

In terms of support received from UK Sport, ten of the respondents spoke positively:

“The indirect financial support we receive from UK Sport has enabled us to get the organisation going and to deliver many high impact projects over the last 10 years.” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“Ongoing financial support (UK Sport IRIS), ILP Alumni, good networking” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“Financially well supported by UK sport.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“UKS most supportive on all aspects leadership and personal development to attain international position and status.” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“I have good contact with my NGB and with UK Sport.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

“I have a great relationship with individuals at UKS who have been enormously generous with time, insight and resource to enable me to use networks and knowledge gained at national level at international level.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“UK Sport and the current [NGB] President are extremely supportive” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

“Uk Sport international influence team are very supportive.” (Female respondent, Senior Position)

“I feel I have support from the IF Sec Gen, UK Sport and my NGB.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“Always definitely supported by U.K. Sport.” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

When discussing a lack of support, respondents discussed the same sources as presented above. In terms of support areas, they reported:

- Lack of funding/financial support
- Lack of educational and developmental support
- Lack of support relating to elections
- Lack of strategy
- Feeling unvalued
- Negative influence of politics
- Poor leadership

- Lack of support with a heavy workload

Some of these areas of support mirrored the positive responses, whilst others raised separate issues relating to poor leadership and governance of organisations.

Six respondents spoke of a lack of support received from UK Sport:

“I receive no support from UK Sport or the National Governing Body.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“Being involved in a sport which lost funding from UKS after London 2012 it is only recently that some funding has returned and we are somewhat of a Cinderella sport as far as the establishment is concerned.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“Limited educational support in developing skills at IF level.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“While my federation supports, I have no contact with UK top sport. Not sure if they even know what I do.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

“Unless your sport were in receipt of major funding from UK Sport they would not support a person in “International representation sport. That is changing but only a little” (Male respondent, Junior Positions)

“I appear to have rather flown under the radar of most people at UK Sport/BOA and have had relatively little contact over the years bar the international Leadership Programme and more recently when I started pushing for additional contact.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

Notably, five of these respondents were men compared to one woman.

3.8. Learnings and advice for future leaders

When it came to respondents reporting their biggest learnings from holding a post within international sport governance, some gender differences were evident. For example, the most frequently reported learning from male respondents was international/intercultural learning (n=9; 26%), whereas no women discussed this:

“Learning how to work with different regions & regional members. Understanding regional economies, cultures and sports programmes and how these might impact on the delivery of core programmes/events.” (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“To recognise Sport in its global capacity and not just through the eye of the developed sporting nations.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

The fact that international/intercultural learning was reported so frequently by male respondents highlights that views from countries with developed economies continue to be positioned as the norm within international sport governance (Henne & Pape, 2018). That is, international/intercultural learning is necessary because ways of working within countries with developed economies are positioned as ‘business as usual’. Gender differences in the reporting of international/intercultural learning need exploring further. It could be that these differences are related to privilege. White, heterosexual, able-bodied British men are in a position of privilege where their social identity and characteristics have become normalised and naturalised within sport governance (Piggott & Pike, 2020). This means that learning is required to understand the perspectives and experiences of those who sit outside of this dominant profile because it is outside of the norm. As presented earlier in this report, many British women postholders come from a position of marginalisation and discrimination. Therefore, it could be suggested that female postholders better relate to individuals of different social backgrounds, and so interculturalism is not such a learning for these individuals.

These reported international/intercultural learnings were combined with several additional comments provided at the end of the survey⁵ that discussed how British postholders and those from other nations with developed economies recognise and value their opinions and views more than those from nations with developing economies:

“[There is a need] to recognise sport in its global capacity and not just through the eye of the developed sporting nations.” (Male respondent, Junior Position)

“My experience is that British post holders are sometimes considered to be very self important and unwilling to listen to the views of others.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

This suggests that neo-colonialism remains an issue within international sport governance, where views and practices from countries with developed economies are positioned as superior and imposed on those from other nations. In terms of wider inclusivity, this raises concerns about not only the representation, but also the influence of those from nations

⁵ In response to the following question: ‘Please let us know any other thoughts or comments that you have that you think are relevant to this project’.

with developing economies. When gender intersects with neo-colonial practices, it is likely that women and minorities from countries with developing economies are facing significant subordination.

Another gender difference was in learnings linked to individual responses/characteristics in relation to challenges in international sport leadership. Several women (n=7; 35%) reported a need for determination, perseverance, patience, and acceptance:

“Patience and tenacity are key. Recognise small gains and build on them.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“That some people will never change, and you just have to work round them.” (Female respondent, Junior Positions)

“Not to get too annoyed by the corruption but to do my best.” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

This was compared to just three men (9%). Several women, and some men, relatedly advised that prospective international postholders need to foster resilience, patience, and determination to succeed in the sector:

“It's a long journey, there will be many obstacles but persevere” (Male respondent, Junior Positions)

“It's really hard and don't take anything personally as there is a lot of politics.” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

This demonstrates a certain acceptance by women (and some men) of challenges and problematic practices and processes within international sport governance, with a focus on ‘keeping going’ within a problematic sector rather than resisting or challenging the system itself. This is problematic if women leaders feel like they must bear the burden of challenges and barriers in international sport governance. As mentioned previously, such a seemingly gendered burden could lead to more dropouts amongst women than men. This is supported by existing research. For example, Pfister and Radke (2006) found that women on German sport boards dropped out because they experienced incivilities, unpleasant politics, and power play on the board.

Two learnings were frequently reported by both male and female respondents, both of which align with results already presented in this report. First, it was advised by several men (n=7; 20%) and women (n=3; 15%) that there is a need to develop effective communication, strong networks, and good relationships:

“Relationships and trust are more important than competence and capacity.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“People and relationships are almost as important as knowledge and experience (though you need these too).” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

This led to several respondents (7 men and 6 women) giving advice on this topic to prospective postholders, e.g.:

“Take your time, make friends and be nice to people. People vote and select those they like.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“Make networks, be seen as someone people can talk to who listens and makes informed decisions.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

Second, several men (n=5; 14%) and women (n=4; 20%) spoke of a key learning being to develop a good understanding of sectoral/organisational politics and how to navigate them:

“That politics and bias are rife and still too many decisions are made by the few for the benefit of the few.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“The heavy influence of politics.” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

Two further themes were reported by several men and women in giving advice to prospective postholders. First, both men (n=5; 14%) and women (n=2; 10%) discussed the importance of having a good understanding and knowledge of sporting and organisational contexts:

“Prior to accepting, understand the role you are being asked to play and the context of how the IF operates - e.g., [are] ... staff 'rich' or is your IF role a working 'hands on' volunteer role. Take time to learn about the key personnel in the IF, the region they come from, how their sport & cultural experiences at a national/regional level may influence their approach to the IF and how best to engage with them. Take time to understand the global economy for the sport and the challenges and opportunities it might present to future growth/development”. (Male respondent, Senior Position)

“Gain knowledge in your sport.” (Female respondent, Junior Positions)

Getting ‘insider knowledge’ is often heavily linked to networking, again reiterating the need for gender inclusive and equitable international sport networks.

Both men (n=3; 9%) and women (n=2; 10%) also advised on the need to maintain integrity:

“Maintain honesty/integrity and speak with everybody.” (Male respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

“Stay strong, resolute and above all be true and honest in your ambitions and strengths.” (Female respondent, Senior Positions)

This advice was likely in response to the frequent reports of politics and corruption being a continued issue in international sport governance.

One piece of advice given by female respondents that was not given by male respondents was related to the usefulness of having Olympic experience to gain respect, influence, and having the confidence to speak up:

“It helps a lot to have been an Olympic athlete.” (Female respondent, Junior Position)

“Having an Olympic medal helps.” (Female respondent, Junior and Senior Positions)

This aligns with the quantitative findings reported earlier that show that the proportion of women who had competed at international level (70%) was significantly higher than men (48%). These findings indicate that sporting capital is still highly valued within the international sport sector and can act as an important factor in women leaders being perceived as credible and competent leaders. This is problematic, however, when women’s

participation in (elite) sport is still heavily influenced by different social barriers that result in skewed participation rates, particularly for minority women. For example, a UK Sport-commission research report found that, in June 2020, White athletes made up 89% of all 1019 athletes on UK Sport's World Class Programme (WCP) (Shibli, Gumber, & Ramchandani, 2021). This is compared to 1% who were Asian or Asian British, 3% who were Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, and 6% who were from mixed or multiple ethnic groups. Whilst these figures were not broken down according to gender, the same report found that males from ethnically diverse communities have a 20% higher odds ratio compared with females to be active, demonstrating the workings of the intersectional inequalities of gender and ethnicity (Shibli et al., 2021). If sporting capital is, therefore, an important resource for women in gaining access to international sport governance positions and having influence once in position, then it is likely to negatively contribute to wider diversity amongst British postholders:

[There needs to be] more support for para athletes to go into leadership positions. (Female respondent, Junior Position)

RECOMMENDATION

11. To review the advice provided to prospective postholders and incorporate this into future leadership programmes, e.g., building relationships and networks, the importance of understanding the structural and political contexts of individual sports and organisations, and how to navigate politics, corruption, and other power conflicts within international sport organisations.

4. SUMMARY

An online survey was distributed to British postholders in international sport governance. There were fifty-five responses and just under two-thirds of the respondents were men (n=35; 64%) whilst just over one-third were women (n=20; 36%). Overall, there was a significant lack of diversity across our sample, with queer gender identities, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities being notably underrepresented. This is indicative of the social challenges that international sport governance faces in relation to inclusion and diversity. It also demonstrates the need for more research exploring the reasons for such underrepresentation across minority and marginalised groups, as well as ways of meaningfully and sustainably increasing representation and recognition of these groups.

Responses to this survey indicate that many of those working in the sector (both male and female) are very aware of its lack of inclusivity, with a majority (60%) of the sample reporting that it is not inclusive at all or not inclusive enough. A diverse and multi-layered range of factors were reported as contributors to the lack of inclusivity, showing the complexity and contentiousness of the issue. It is important that postholders in international sport governance not only recognise the issue, but also feel motivated and empowered to address it.

With a historic underrepresentation of women and minority groups in international sport governance, it is important to understand the paths that postholders take to reach influential positions. There were multiple routes into international sport governance, though empirical evidence now supports the notion that individuals will have national experience prior to an international role. Women tended to state their national and continental experience more than men, who noted their international experience as most influential. Generally, respondents were siloed in one sport throughout their career pathway.

A further purpose of the survey was to examine gendered perceptions and experiences of British postholders in relation to obtaining an international post, making an impact, challenges faced, support (or lack of) received, and learnings and advice. We did, indeed, find some gendered trends across these themes.

An overall finding was that networks continue to be highly valued and very influential for international sport postholders. However, it was found that men and women value networks in different ways and at different points in their journey. For men, networks were reported to be particularly influential in obtaining an international post, whereas women reported them as being particularly important in making an impact once in post. On the contrary, women identified their experience, motivations, and achievements as being more influential in obtaining international posts, whereas they reported that building networks and trusting relationships was important in making an impact in their role. This suggests that women leaders find it easier to establish and benefit from influential networks once in an international role, whereas men establish and benefit from networks before even applying for international roles. This demonstrates the importance of supporting both men and women to develop networks at all stages of their career paths.

When discussing the challenges faced in obtaining international sport roles, it was noticeable that male respondents mostly discussed challenges related to their role, organisation, or external factors. In particular, problematic politics and power games were frequently discussed by male respondents as an issue that continues to plague international sport governance. Only one man discussed challenges related to their social position, and notably this was a gay man. On the contrary, women more frequently discussed challenges related to their positionality/social position and individual challenges, such as marginalisation, male dominance, lack of self-confidence, and discrimination/abuse/harassment. Several women spoke of being disadvantaged because of their gender. This was combined with women also discussing individual-led strategies for overcoming marginalisation and discrimination, such as having determination and perseverance, working hard, and developing experiences and qualifications. Such strategies were commonly reported as learnings and advice for prospective international postholders. This combination of women reporting challenges related to their social position, and individual-led strategies to combat such challenges, demonstrates the significant extra burden that women leaders experience in this regard compared to their male counterparts. This burden is likely enough for some women leaders to either refrain from applying for sport international roles or drop out once in position.

Another gendered trend in key learnings from international sport governance was that a significant number of men, but no women, spoke of international/intercultural learning compared to no women. The gendered reasons for this are uncertain but could be related to white male privilege positioning white men as 'the norm', and so any practices and processes being outside of this norm being more strongly positioned as 'other' by white men. More learning is, therefore, required to understand, value, and appreciate the perspectives of others. These reported international/intercultural learnings were accompanied by indications that neo-colonialism remains an issue within international sport governance, where views and practices from countries with developed economies are positioned as superior and imposed on those from other nations. This raises concerns about the extent to which women and minorities from countries with developing economies are seen and heard.

No gendered trends were noticeable in the sources and types of support provided to British international postholders. These sources of support were varied, and were mostly from NGBs, UK Sport, IFs, colleagues and networks, senior figures, and leaders. Learning and development opportunities were particularly highly valued. These findings demonstrate that much work is being done in the sector to attempt to equitably support leaders in international sport organisations.

Throughout, the authors have identified recommendations for UK Sport to address gendered inequalities in the career pathways of British postholders in international sport governance. The second phase of this research will involve speaking to some of those surveyed to add greater richness to the study. Narrative interviews will encourage the postholders to allude more to their background and career progression, the practices and processes of international sport governance, and experiences of gender norms and expectations.

5. FULL LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Track wider diversity amongst British international postholders to monitor broader inclusivity issues.
2. Explore ways in which education and development can go beyond 'fixing the woman' and have a greater organisational focus. This could include the identification and development of one or more individuals (e.g., 'gender equity champions') within each organisation who hold influential positions and can identify and advocate for talented prospective female candidates.
3. Create a bank/dataset of identified forthcoming opportunities in international sport governance (e.g., end-of-terms for positions and committee membership) with a mechanism to circulate and promote these to individuals who have indicated an interest in such positions.
4. Review what support NGBs and IFs are providing to those transitioning (or wishing to transition) into international sport governance and identify and share best practice.
5. Review the support offered to individuals advancing from junior to senior roles in international sport organisations.
6. Provide more (diverse) networking opportunities for prospective and current women leaders that can support them in obtaining international roles and developing from junior to senior positions.
7. Develop strategies to nurture the self-confidence of prospective and current women postholders.
8. Provide greater support to international sport organisations to identify and overcome problematic politics and corruption within their organisations.
9. Provide reasonable financial support to reduce financial barriers for prospective and current female postholders, e.g., support with travel expenses.
10. Develop formal reporting processes for abuse and discrimination experienced by those working in sport administration and governance. This can provide a safe space for these individuals to gain support, as well as develop greater insight into the extent to which this is an institutionalised issue across the sector, and in turn inform how UK Sport can address such issues with international sport organisations.
11. To review the advice provided to prospective postholders and incorporate this into future leadership programmes, e.g., building relationships and networks, the importance of understanding the structural and political contexts of individual sports and organisations, and how to navigate politics, corruption, and other power conflicts within international sport organisations.

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