



GENDER EQUALITY

Towards More Gender Equality and Inclusion in Judo



INTRODUCTION

The Gender Equity Strategy of May 2019 articulated the International Judo Federation's (IJF) priorities for advancing gender equity across the sport and achieving the vision of a community that is inclusive, respectful, fair and safe, for people of all genders. The general aim of the first edition of the Gender Equity Commission (GEC) Strategy was "to gradually achieve gender equality and improve gender equity in judo according to the growth of women's judo all over the world. Judo needs to be perceived and recognised as a sport equally suitable for men and women."



From 2019 to 2022, many activities focussing on the empowerment of women and girls in judo were implemented but statistics still show a less favourable position for women, who are insufficiently represented in judo, particularly in leadership positions.

The experiences of many sport organisations, including the International Olympic Committee, regarding progress towards gender equality, gave us the incentive to create a new version of the GEC Strategy that is harmonised with the gender equality goals of Olympic sports, expressing the need for more diverse activities at all levels: IJF, continental unions and national judo federations.

BACKGROUND

Gender Equality in Judo

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Many years passed, but still when we look around in most sport arenas, we see men prevailing. Although we are witnessing more and more girls and women involved in sport, they are still underrepresented, from grassroots to elite sport levels, from the position of active athlete to leadership roles in many sports.

From the time of Jigoro Kano and the beginnings of judo in many countries, women were practising judo; there is evidence, from the late 19th century, in Japan of women practising judo at the Kodokan. Competitions for women began later than for men and as a consequence, judo was included as a new sport at the Olympic Games in Tokyo 1964 but only for men. It took 28 years for women to be able to participate in the judo event at the Olympic Games. Although the first women's world championship was held in New York in 1980, women waited until the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games to be included in the Olympic programme.

Despite different historical competition pathways, the development of judo in recent decades led to full gender equality regarding all aspects of competition and that meant the same contest rules, joint events (judo competitions are organised for men and women at the same time and place, with every day different men and women's categories), equal awards and prize money for men and women, equal Olympic quota and mixed team participation (introduced into the Tokyo 2020 Olympic programme, held in 2021).

As it was clear that women in judo were still inadequately represented and that national judo federations needed the IJF to lead the way in creating the steps to achieve gender equality, the Gender Equity Commission was established in



2017. The term 'equity' was used to illustrate that all actions and policy need to be directed towards the needs of specific persons or groups, to achieve equal access and or opportunity in all areas. In 2018 the first Gender Equity Conference was held in Baku as part of the World Championship programme and in 2019 the Gender Equity Strategy was adopted. In 2022 the Commission was renamed, the Gender Equality Commission, to highlight the main goal of all activity: gender equality. Continental unions and national judo federation (NJF) presidents were asked to establish their Gender Equality Commissions to ensure co-operation with the IJF in implementing programmes and activities.

MISSION

The aim of the IJF is to gradually achieve gender equality and improve gender equity through the growth of women's judo all over the world. Judo should be perceived and recognised as a sport equally suitable for men and women.

Judo is an Olympic combat sport that respects and continuously promotes gender equality in all its aspects. The IJF, in co-operation with its members, continental unions (CU) and national judo federations (NJF), seeks to implement gender equity activities, performances and policies, thus contributing to the sustainable and responsible development of society.

THE NEED FOR A MORE ACTIVE APPROACH

Beyond the individual benefits judo offers to all those who practise it, regardless of gender or age, judo can change the way women and girls see themselves and the way communities perceive them. Seeing girls participate in judo challenges gender norms and assumptions about the capability, status and value of women and girls. It can also be a great leveller, helping people see beyond their prejudices, helping to break down barriers.

Judo also plays a powerful role in bringing communities together and enhancing social cohesion. The IJF recognises that addressing gender equity is crucial to achieve better health and social wellbeing. During two gender equity 'Together we are Stronger' conferences, held in 2018 (Baku) and 2019 (Tokyo), the judo community expressed a willingness to work on the transition to a more gender sensitive judo community.

Although much progress has been achieved (IJF statutory changes to women making up 25% of the President's list and 25% of the IJF Executive Committee, in 2021), gender statistics still show a wide gap between shares of men and women in different positions. Therefore, it is important to continue and implement new activities that will lead to more balanced participation and to produce a more active approach.





ACTION PLAN

Main Themes and Activities

The IJF GEC action plan encompasses goals and recommended activities according to conclusions made from the IJF survey (obstacles for gender equity according to the statement of the national judo federations):

- Participation
- Media and social portrayal
- Funding
- Governance
- Planning and monitoring

Most activities are applicable to the IJF and its members, dependent on the implementation of previous activities and their impact on gender equality.

PARTICIPATION

Goal: Raised percentage of women in judo in every position (athletes, coaches, referees, administration, and other officials)

Recommended actions:	Timeline:
Raise awareness of judo as a sport for women (research and communication about the benefits of judo as a sport for women)	Ongoing
Raise awareness about the need to achieve gender equality in judo (annual conferences, educational seminars or webinars); work on social media promotional campaigns	Yearly
Establish a gender database and write progress reports (every year); establish platform on the web*	By the end of 2022
Establish a gender equality or similar commission with defined tasks and responsibilities (establish awards for those with greatest rise in percentage of women)*	October 2022
Ensure equal access and opportunity to resources (including venues, equipment, education)	Ongoing
Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women	Ongoing
Empower women to prolong their sport career by taking different positions (transition to coach, referee or leadership position). Retain women in judo; develop mentoring initiatives at all levels	Periodically

* Does not apply to the IJF and members that have already established GE or similar commission and collect info on gender basis.



Ways Forward: It is known that the IJF already ensures the same conditions during competition for men and women (same rules, equipment, quotas, prize money and inclusion in mixed teams), making judo a sport equal for both genders.

Statistics clearly indicate the position of women. Data collected by Judobase allows identification of various positions of women. In 2022, women as athletes (26%), coaches (14%), referees (25%), general secretaries (24%) and as presidents of national judo federations (8%) were registered. Those numbers were raised slightly through the last decade and continuous effort should be invested to raise awareness of the benefits of judo as a sport for women and of the necessity to involve and retain women in sport officials' positions, giving them equal chances to those of men.

The intensity of all the recommended actions depends on the starting point and effects of previously implemented projects on gender equity or equality. Raising awareness usually requires involvement of the media team in planning and implementing promotional campaigns or educational activities, to be organised periodically.

The IJF and some national judo federations already started with continuous activities aimed at increasing the percentage of women in judo in some positions (best practice noted in IJF GEC documents online: <https://www.ijf.org/ijf/documents/12>).



MEDIA AND SOCIAL PORTRAYAL

- Goals:**
- Perception/image of judo as a sport equally suitable for men and women
 - Balanced media portrayal of both genders (gender sensitive portrayal, treating women as athletes)

Recommended actions:	Timeline:
Ensure sufficient photos and videos of women in database (motivational displays)	Ongoing
Conduct Interviews with women in judo as role models (athletes, coaches, referees, leaders)	Periodically
Organise and conduct promotional campaigns on the need for diversity in judo ('Stronger Together' and similar campaigns on social networks); use women to show the social attractiveness of judo (benefits of judo for local communities: the fight against drugs, the fight against violence among children, inclusive judo, contribution to sustainable development)	Periodically
Involve men as gender equality promoters in all areas (participation, coaching, officiating, leadership)	Ongoing
Support scientific research on gender stereotypes regarding women in judo	By 2024

Ways Forward: Media presence has the most important role in choosing to practise a specific sport. Judo is well known as an Olympic combat sport but is still perceived as a ‘male dominated’ sport. There is a need to improve this image of judo and establish an image of sport that is suitable for both genders. In many countries women are less exposed to media in sport and through judo we can improve this position. In this context, women can be highlighted more for showing the benefits of judo for local community development, showing the social attractiveness of judo and not only sport results.

As changing perceptions and image can be slow, we need to be persistent, continuing promotional activities that are focused on the benefits of judo for both genders. As we know from research studies, role models are among the most efficient sport promoters; we need to employ judo women to promote different positions and different careers that women can have in judo: athletes, referees, coaches, and officials. Research around gender stereotypes would help to better define characteristics that should be emphasized.

FUNDING

- Goals:**
- Ensured budget for empowering women in judo
 - Equal pay for work of equal value

Recommended actions:	Timeline:
Achieve equal pay for work of equal value (promote equal contract conditions)	Ongoing
Ensure budget for developing action plan for implementing gender equality	Annually
Apply the equity principle - ensure the place of women in the education of coaches or referees, in seminars organised by other organisations: NOC, IJF or IOC	Ongoing
Ensure transparent and open recruitment processes	Depending on recruitment timeline



Ways Forward: Equal pay for work of equal value is one of the most important goals in the general labour market, including sport. The IJF secured equal pay through equal prize money for male and female judo players.

A basic barriers against establishing the prerequisites for the better position of women in judo concerns the lack of budget. As NOCs usually have a dedicated budget for 'gender equality activities,' it is important for national judo federations to be informed about and use all these opportunities.

For all the possibilities opened through IOC or own funds, the IJF invites its partners, CUs and national judo federations to nominate both genders. Securing places for women in educational seminars (usually for coaches and referees) would support women, as well as reducing the seminar fees for women applicants.

GOVERNANCE

Goal: Ensured prerequisites for gender balanced representation in governing bodies and leadership positions

Recommended actions:	Timeline:
Establish and implement representation quota for women in all decision-making and management bodies (IJF quota as minimum)	By the end of 2022
Work on pipeline of women as leaders and managers in judo	Ongoing
Raise awareness of the need for diverse gender representation as a good governance principle	Periodically

Ways Forward: As stated in IJF Gender Statistics (2022), the gap between men and women in judo is greatest at leadership level. The percentage of women as national federation presidents is low (8%) but the percentage of women as general secretaries is at its highest (24%), meaning that women are more involved in judo management at national level now than several years ago. (<https://www.ijf.org/ijf/documents/12>).

The history of sport is showing us that changes in management and/or leadership are too slow unless a representation quota in governing bodies is set. The IJF recommendation of women as 25% of executive boards, to be incorporated within statutes of national judo federations, is a very important one. With statutory changes and with a higher percentage of women not only at the executive board level but also in the structure of the commissions, changes could occur much faster and the benefits of more women in decision-making processes and in management could be used for the advancement of judo.



PLANNING AND MONITORING

Goal: Developed and adopted Gender Action Plan with defined system of implementation and progress monitoring.

Recommended actions:	Timeline:
Set goals and priority actions regarding gender equality – develop simple action plan (status, goals, activities, responsibilities)	By the end of 2023 for period of 2-4 years
Secure visibility and availability of action plan; it should be widely available as a reference document; promotional event can be organised to present and discuss the action plan	A few months upon developing action plan
Report on the progress (status of the planned activities)	Annually

Ways Forward: In 2019 the IJF launched the Gender Equity Commission Strategy to set goals and priorities focused on removing obstacles and improving the position of women in judo. According to the IJF survey conducted in 2018, 23 national judo federations reported on their activities on gender equality (establishing commissions and/or initiating activities to empower women). As a result, slight changes in the percentage of women in different positions were achieved, but to harmonise with IOC goals, it was necessary to speed up changes in this area. Therefore, this new version of the GEC Strategy defined goals, activities and timelines, so that all the members can plan similar activities, according to the reality of their gender equality status.

The action plan is a management tool that can help with setting priorities and following progress. All activities must have budget allocation and responsible persons committed to carrying out the planned activities. The action plan can bring all necessary stakeholders together and ensure the desired pace of the changes regarding gender equality in judo. It is important to make certain that the action plan is implemented and monitored in the most efficient way through people with adequate knowledge and background (gender equality commissions and chairs).



CONCLUSION

The IJF Gender Equality Strategy “**Towards more gender equality and inclusion in judo**” should serve as a basic framework for developing gender equality planning documents in all judo communities. Depending on goals already achieved regarding the empowerment of women in judo, the IJF members can plan, organise and implement recommended actions. There is a need to start from the national level, in order to fulfil all aims on the continental and international level. Only in partnership with its members, will the IJF succeed to make a bigger step forward in achieving gender equality in judo.





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