

Athletics: C+

For many people, Title IX is synonymous with expanded opportunities in athletics. Women's and girls' increased participation in sports, the impressive achievements of the nation's female athletes, their stunning advances in summer and winter Olympic Games, and the creation of nationally televised professional women's basketball and soccer leagues demonstrate Title IX's success. It takes a large and vibrant base of general sports participants and 15 to 20 years of elite athlete support to create an Olympic gold medalist or professional athlete - years in which an athlete is given access to quality coaching, sports facilities, weight rooms, athletic scholarships, and competition. Before Title IX, women and girls were precluded from taking advantage of most athletic opportunities in school, but the outcome of equal opportunity on the playing fields is becoming more apparent.

Still, Olympic medals and professional sports contracts are not what Title IX is all about. Rather, the quest for equal opportunity in sports has always been about the physiological, sociological, and psychological benefits of sports and physical activity participation. Research studies commissioned by the Women's Sports Foundation in 1998 and 2000 found that girls who play sports enjoy greater physical and emotional health and are less likely to engage in a host of risky health behaviors (i.e., drug use, smoking, and drinking) than nonparticipants. Other studies have linked sports participation to reduced incidences of breast cancer and osteoporosis later in life. Yet compared to boys, girls enjoy 30 percent fewer opportunities to participate in high school and college sports and are twice as likely to be inactive. Much distance remains between the current status of women and girls in sports and the ultimate goal of gender equity.

Participation Rates and Resource Allocation

Prior to 1972, women and girls looking for athletic competition were more likely to try out for cheerleading or secure places in the bleachers as spectators. In 1971 fewer than 295,000 girls participated in high school varsity athletics, accounting for just 7 percent of all high school varsity athletes. The outlook for college women was equally grim: Fewer than 30,000 females competed in intercollegiate athletics. Low participation rates reflected the lack of institutional commitment to providing athletics programming for women. Before Title IX, female college athletes received only 2 percent of overall athletic budgets, and athletic scholarships for women were virtually nonexistent.

Title IX has changed the playing field significantly. By 2001 nearly 2.8 million girls participated in athletics, representing 41.5 percent of varsity athletes in U.S. high schools - an increase of more than 847 percent from 1971. Progress on college campuses has also been impressive. Today 150,916 women compete in intercollegiate sports, accounting for 43 percent of college varsity athletes - an increase of more than 403 percent from 1971. Contrary to media reports, men's participation levels at both the high school and college level have also increased....

Although the resources and benefits allocated to female athletes also have improved significantly after Title IX's passage, they also fall far short of what equity requires. After 30 years, the gap is still significant and closing much too slowly. Institutions are not exercising restraint on men's sports expenditures while women's sports catch up.

In the past four years, for every new dollar going into athletics at the Division I and Division II levels, male sports received 58 cents while female sports received 42 cents.

Each year male athletes receive \$133 million or 36 percent more than female athletes in college athletic scholarships at NCAA member institutions

In Division I, colleges spent an average of \$2,983 per female athlete compared to \$3,786 for male athletes.

-National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, "Title IX at 30: Report Card on Gender Equity" (2002) excerpt