

Changing the Rules of the Game: A Gender Perspective on Sports Allocations in Israel

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Introducing gender mainstreaming to the allocation of sports funding

Gender mainstreaming the processes of formulating, implementing and analyzing policy is a relatively new approach to promoting gender equality.¹ The central assumption behind this approach is that public policy is not neutral and that it has a differential influence on woman and men. Thus if we want to promote gender equality in a certain policy area, we need to examine the mainstream – to consider the extent to which the general distribution of resources accommodates and responds to the often divergent interests and needs of men and women. We are not discussing the creation of special policies or allocations for women, but rather of the implications for men and women of existing policies; the result may well be that the policy and the subsequent distribution of resources need to be revised so that the benefits extend to both men and women, in accordance with their needs.

Sports is one of the areas in which gender inequality is most prominent. There are two distinct kinds of sports activities that we should consider: popular sports and competitive sports. Popular sports is a general term for all kinds of leisure sports activities carried out as part of a healthy and enjoyable life style; it encompasses individual activities outside organized frameworks as well as activities carried out with trainers in groups and at sports facilities (see Israel Sport for All website, www.isfa.co.il). Competitive sports refers to activities carried out by male and female athletes in the framework of sports clubs and associations, some 70 of which are registered in Israel. Both popular and competitive sports are partially or fully supported by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, as well as by other public agencies, such as local authorities and the Sports Betting Board.

Despite the fact that many women participate in popular sports, women and girls are much less represented than men in competitive sports and receive much less national and municipal support.

In Israel, women aged 13 and older make up no more than 19% of the total population engaging in competitive sports. They are equally underrepresented as trainers – less than 8% – and as sportscasters; and the written media

devotes less than 5% of its total sports coverage to women's sports events (<http://www.mos.gov.il/sport/pages/default.aspx>). Women constitute a clear minority of only 15% among decision-makers on sports association boards; this also holds true for those areas in which the participation of male and female athletes is similar, e.g., swimming, of which women constitute 44%, and in which women are the majority, e.g. gymnastics, where women constitute 82% of all participants (Ilan and Galily, 2010).

Main sources of sports funding in Israel

Two public agencies provide most of Israel's sports funding, the Sports Authority and the Israel Sports Betting Board. Additionally, sports associations and clubs receive allocations from local authorities and raise funds from various private entities. This paper concentrates on the funding and support of the two largest resources, the Sports Authority and the Israel Sports Betting Board.

The Sports Authority

The Sports Authority is part of the Ministry of Culture and Sports and provides allocations for various areas including competitive sports, popular sports, the advancement of women in sports, and the construction and renovation of sports facilities. In 2010, the largest part of the Sports Authority's budget – NIS 77,674,000 – went to support sports activities. It provides local authorities with allocations for popular sports activities such as walking and biking treks, the Sea of Galilee swim, sports marathons, and work-place sports leagues. Local authorities apply for funding, and the Sports Authority's allocation is determined on the basis of a number of parameters including the local authority's population, socio-economic status, and its degree of peripherality.

The Sports Authority also supports sports clubs and associations, competitive sports, and Olympic facilities for individuals and teams; the criteria for support do not include gender.

THE SPORTS “BASKET”

The Sports Authority’s “basket” funds local authorities’ sports associations and activities. We can examine the allocations in the basket to distinguish government allocations to sport associations by branch, gender and age. An initial analysis of allocations in 2010-2011 reveals that **23,899** male athletes received support and only **3,973** female athletes; and that **27,018** young male athletes enjoyed the benefit of financing as against **2,071** young female athletes (<http://www.mcs.gov.il/Sport/Application/Pages/salSportTZibur.aspx>).

GENDER ANALYSIS OF SPORTS FUNDING IN THE HERZLIYA MUNICIPALITY

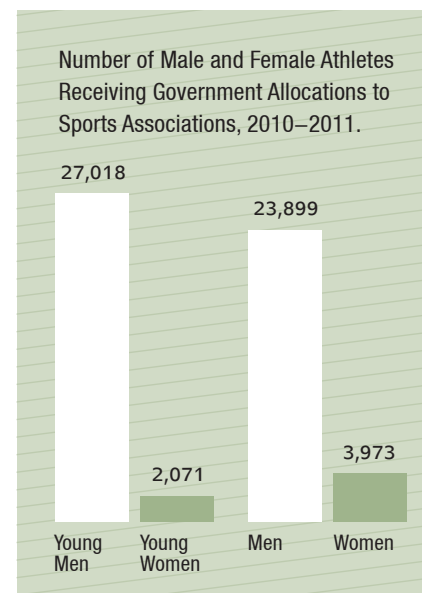
The Mayor’s Advisor on for the Promotion of the Status of Women and the head of the Women’s Authority in the Herzliya Municipality examined municipal allocations for sports. Their inquiry revealed that even though women constituted 37% of all athletes in the city, only 25% of the sports budget for associations was earmarked for women’s sports (Granot and Sadgat-Erez, 2009).

The Athena Project for the Promotion of Women and Girls in Sports

“Athena” – the Council for the Promotion of Women and Girls in Sports, was established by the Ministry of Culture and Sports at the end of 2007² with the aim of increasing the number of women and girls engaged in sports activities and encouraging women’s leadership in sports. In 2011, women aged 13 and older constituted 19% of all athletes registered in sports clubs and associations. Athena’s goal is to raise that number to 25% by 2017 (when the project will come to an end).

The Ministry of Culture and Sports has allocated Athena NIS 80 million over a period of 10 years, NIS 8 million per year. Athena also receives approximately NIS 1.8 million from the Sports Authority for the project’s administrative expenses. Presently, Athena has a balance of approximately NIS 50 million.

The Athena Project supports sport clubs and associations that maintain sports activities for women according to specific criteria. The project’s budget is divided between 8 main branches³ that receive allocations to develop women’s activities in specific categories; financing for special projects within the clubs, associations and other sports bodies for women’s sport; support of new women’s teams in the various associations; and support for six additional bodies.⁴



Thanks to Athena, the number of young women involved in sports has risen. In ball game disciplines⁵ their number grew from 2,560 in 2005-2006 to 5,396 in 2011-2010. In individual sports, the number of female athletes grew from 2,629 in 2005-2006 to 3,713 in 2010-2011.⁶ In addition, 243 new women’s teams were founded since Athena was established, and thanks to Athena’s activities, the percentage of women serving on the boards of sports clubs has risen from approximately 15% in 2006 to 20% in 2010.⁷

Omrit Eden-Yanilov, Director of Project Athena, believes that one of the main stumbling blocks to increasing the number of young girls participating in competitive sports is rooted in social perceptions. Influenced by the perception that competitive sports are not “feminine,” many girls shy away from them, especially ball games.⁸ Unfortunately, this perception ignores the contribution that sports can have in developing a young woman’s personality: a number of studies have shown that sports can contribute to self-confidence, body perception, interpersonal relationship competencies, and the development of skills such as leadership, responsibility, and team work (Borowitz 2012; Sever 2008; Bernstein & Galily 2008). As of 2012, the Athena Project has allocated more of its resources to changing attitudes about women and sports among the public in general and adolescent girls in particular.

The Athena project is an important step toward increasing women's and girls' participation in competitive sports as well as in raising awareness of the importance and advantages of engaging in sports. Concomitantly, changes in sports policy can be promoted by the introduction of gender mainstreaming in the central areas of sports policy and allocations, for instance in the criteria for funding and for sponsorships. We shall consider these areas below.

The Israel Sports Betting Board (“Toto”): Allocations for competitive sports

The Israel Sports Betting Board is the executive authority responsible for the distribution of resources to sports clubs, associations, and centers. The allocations are made in accordance with criteria fixed by the Ministry of Culture and Sports. The Sports Betting Board's budget for sports associations and clubs is

FUNDING FOR MEN AND WOMEN ATHLETES IN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM SPORTS (BALL GAMES) IN 2011-2012

	2011			2012		
	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men
Individual sports⁹: Supported athletes	24,584	7,441	17,143	26,053	8,884	17,169
Percentages	100%	About 30%	About 70%	100%	About 34%	About 66%
Team sports: Ball games¹⁰ Supported athletes	52,063	5,865	48,198	55,626	6,634	48,992
Percentages	100%	About 11%	About 89%	100%	About 12%	About 88%

Source: Israel Sports Betting Board, Allocations Department, Data for 2011 and 2012

FUNDING FOR MAJOR BALL TEAMS IN 2011-2012

	2011					2012				
	Total teams funded - number	Women's teams funded - number	Men's teams funded - number	Women's teams funded - percentage	Men's teams funded - percentage	Total teams funded - number	Women's teams funded - number	Men's teams funded - number	Women's teams funded - percentage ³	Men's teams funded - percentage
Basket-ball	880	185	695	21%	78%	945	243	702	About 26%	About 74%
Volley-ball	450	197	253	44%	56%	374	170	204	About 45%	About 55%
Soccer	635	27	608	About 4%	About 96%	627	21	606	About 3%	About 97%
Hand-ball	148	23	125	About 15%	About 85%	129	24	105	About 17%	About 83%
Water-ball	35	3	32	About 9%	About 91%	36	2	34	About 6%	About 94%
Total	2,148	435	1,713	About 20%	About 80%	2,111	460	1,651	About 22%	About 78%

Source: Israel Sports Betting Board, Allocations Department, Data for 2011 and 2012

NIS 170 million per year, NIS 90 million of which is set aside for associations and NIS 80 million for clubs. Of the budget, 68% is intended for team sports, 31% for individual sports, and 1% for sports for the disabled.

In 2012, women and girls constituted 12% of all athletes receiving allocations in the team categories – ball games – and 34% of all athletes financed in individual categories. In the major ball game categories, a total of 2,111 teams were supported, 460 of which were women's teams and 1,651 of which were men's teams.

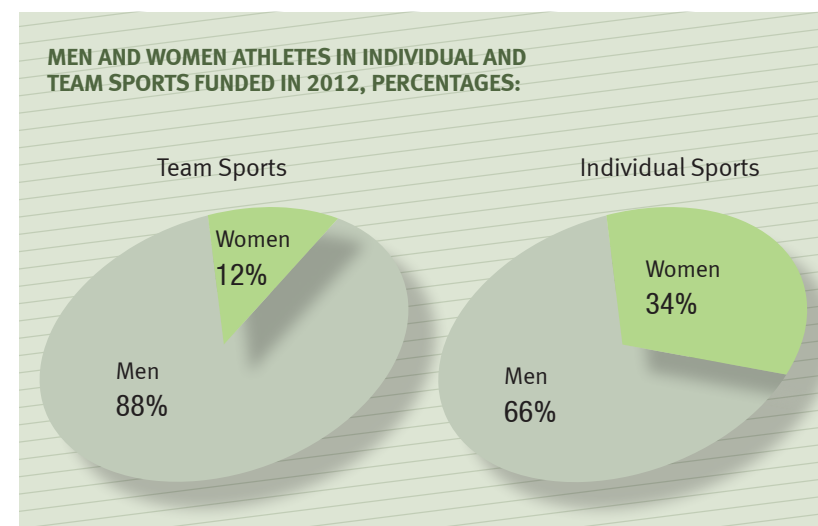
CRITERIA FOR SUPPORT

Allocations for popular and competitive sports are based on criteria published by the Ministry of Culture and Sports. These do not distinguish between women and men, but there are several parameters by which priority for allocations is fixed, such as sex, residence in areas of national preference, residence in localities in socio-economic clusters 1-4 (according to the definition of the Central Bureau of Statistics), and residence in localities in the geographical periphery (calculated by distance from the center). Criteria for support include the following parameters:

1. **Competitiveness** – place of the sport in the international league and its international achievements
2. **Numerical index** – number of athletes registered in the club, number of top teams, and number of leagues in the category
3. **Cost of sport** – cost of equipment required, cost of hiring requisite installations, scope of international activity
4. **Public support for sport** – including number of participants, number of spectators, number of competitions, and media coverage
5. **Professionalism** – number of training sessions and seminars for club managers, coaches, number of international coaches, international publicity

Qualification for support is determined by composite calculation of these parameters. The most heavily weighted parameters (25% each) are the numeri-

cal indices – i.e., the number of athletes, top teams and leagues – and public support – “ratings.” These two parameters, which comprise 50% of the calculation, are those that clearly express the numerical advantage of men's sports over women's sports and the public's attitude to sports as a “man's thing,” because more men and boys are involved in competitive sports, both as participants and as spectators. Assigning the greatest weight to these parameters maintains the status quo in which more men and boys are engaged in publicly funded sports activities and even contributes to the perception that if men



constitute the majority of players, spectators and media consumers of sports, then sports are apparently indeed a “man's thing.”

It should be pointed out that public funding for team sports exceeds that allocated to individual sports because of the greater number of athletes engaged in team sports, but without taking into account achievements. This is in sharp contrast with the fact that top achievements attained by Israeli athletes have actually been in individual sports (Weisblai, 2012).

Assigning a greater weight to the competitive criteria might encourage and motivate more women and girls to take part in competitive sports for two reasons. First, because fewer girls and women engage in competitive sports, their chances of success and excellence would be higher; secondly, giving greater

weight to competitiveness is likely to encourage male and female athletes alike to greater achievements and would thereby involve compensation for excellence.

SPONSORSHIPS

The Israel Sports Betting Board finances activities carried out in sports clubs and associations through direct allocations and, in some cases, by providing sponsorships. The criteria for sponsorship are purely market-driven and include the following parameters:

1. **Exposure of the “product”:** size of audience in the stadium, number of spectators, media coverage, and whether or not bets are taken on the “product.”
2. **Identification and recognition:** long-term activity resulting in identification of the league with the Toto (e.g. “Winner” in men’s Soccer).
3. **Public empathy:** contribution to sports and to the community.
4. **Motivation for action:** to what extent cooperation with the league encourages betting.

The annual budget for all sponsorships to sports organizations is NIS 87 million. The vast majority of the budget, NIS 80 million of it, goes to the men’s soccer super league. In 2013, the men’s basketball super league will enjoy a sponsorship budget of NIS 3 million and the women’s basketball super league will have NIS 2 million (thanks to affirmative action policy).¹¹ The remaining NIS 2 million is divided among various bodies.¹²

In deciding on its sponsorships, the Israel Sports Betting Board looks at a male public and defines the experience of participating in sports, as athlete or spectator, as “a man’s thing.” For instance, the soccer and basketball super leagues offer reduced ticket packages for fathers and sons (Ilan & Galily 2010). Media coverage and broadcasting of sports events and the surrounding publicity broadcasts and the publicity generated around them further maintain the perception that sports is mainly for men.

Ilan and Galily (2010) have studied media coverage and the attitudes toward women’s sports held by readers (male and female) of sports sections versus the attitudes of the editors of sports sections in Israel’s three largest newspapers. Their study showed that while the editors thought that the readership was not interested in women’s sports, a survey among the readership indicated that women and men alike were interested in reading more about women’s sports (Ilan & Galily 2010).

Thus the current situation is that since most of persons actively or passively engaged in sports are men, and the media devotes much more time to covering men’s sports, the criteria defining qualification for direct financial assistance to activities and the criteria for sponsorships conform to the needs and experience of men. Furthermore, the sponsorship budget is also a conduit for significant additional budgeting to male sports, especially soccer.

As noted above, the sponsorship budget is NIS 87 million annually, NIS 80 million of which goes to the men’s soccer super league. That is nearly equivalent to the NIS 90 million that the Israel Sports Betting Board allocates each year to sports associations; clearly, men’s soccer receives significantly higher funding than all other categories of sports.

Difficulties in increasing women’s participation in sports

Our analysis of sports budgeting policy has discerned two main obstacles to the increased participation of women in sports clubs and associations: the criteria for direct support and sponsorships; and insufficient media coverage of women’s sports and the relative absence of women as coaches, broadcasters and commentators, media writers and board members of sports clubs and associations. Together, these factors enhance the social perception that defines sports as a male bastion.

Dorit Keren Zvi, former manager of the Ramat Hasharon women’s basketball team, pointed to additional stumbling blocks: the absence of stipends for women athletes from the Ministry of Culture and Sports, and the lack of access to broadcasting. At present, the Ramat Hasharon team uses its own budget to cover the cost of broadcasting league games (broadcasting generally brings in

money for a team: it is not a net expenditure). Without broadcasting access it is harder to attract sponsors, raise funds, and publicize activities.¹³

Journalist and sports broadcaster Gili Shem Tov¹⁴ has pointed out that when women's games do manage to get broadcast, they are allotted smaller crews and photographers than men's games. Men's games are broadcast directly from the field or stadium and not from the studio, a factor that contributes to the quality of the broadcasting and commenting. Moreover, women's games are usually broadcast at hours when viewing – and ratings – are low, often as “warm ups” for a men's game broadcast.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD – RAMAT HASHARON, A WOMEN'S BASKETBALL SUPER-LEAGUE TEAM

The municipality of Ramat Hasharon invests considerable resources in women's basketball, and its women's basketball team is one of the leading teams in Israel. It is operated and managed by the “*Lachen*,” a non-profit association that since 1986 has devoted itself to promoting women's sports in general and women's basketball in particular.

Lachen has waged many legal battles in its crusade to promote women's sports in Israel, including the campaign for parity in municipal funding for women's and men's sports. In 2004, the association successfully lodged a petition with the Israeli Supreme Court, which ruled that for whatever sum was allocated for men's basketball, the women's team would be entitled to 150%, i.e., the same sum plus an additional 50% (www.rhbb.org.il/apage/27235.php).

A look outside Israel: How are women's sports being promoted elsewhere?

Several different kinds of activities are taking place in various countries of the world with the aim of promoting women in sports. The US is the country where the greatest improvement can be seen in women's participation in competitive sports and in the framework of sports clubs. The main reason – in addition to concerted feminist action for increased women's presence in the public space – is the 1972 adoption of an educational amendment referred to

as “Title IX.” Title IX stipulates the equal distribution of federal resources for women's and men's sports in institutions of higher learning. The budgets for women's sports in colleges and universities have consequently grown significantly, and new opportunities have been created for women's participation in sports activities (Ilan & Galily 2010). Since 1972, the percentage of women engaged in sports has risen dramatically, from 4% to 43%; and the figures for coaches in women's teams are equally impressive, standing now at 55% (Ministry of Culture and Sports, <http://www.mcs.gov.il/sport/pages/default.aspx>). Since 2002, the numbers of male and female athletes in colleges have been nearly equal (with the exception of American football) (Adams & Tuggle 2004). Several countries in the European Union have implemented gender mainstreaming as part of their sports policy, with the specific aim of increasing the number of women and girls benefitting from municipal allocations for sports. For example, the regional Andalusian government in Spain grants subsidies to sports clubs promoting women's sports and finances sports activities for both sexes (Gender Impact Assessment Report on the Budget of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia for 2012).

Gender mainstreaming in policy making is based on adjusting public resources to the differential needs of the men and women making up the population. The **Marzahn-Hellersdorf borough of Berlin** provides an excellent example of formulating policy to conform with population needs. A study indicated that men used public sports centers more than women in this borough, while women made greater use of private fitness centers. On the assumption that it would be beneficial if men and women made use of public sports facilities to the same extent, a goal was established: to increase women's participation in sports at public installations, thereby enhancing efficient distribution of municipal resources. To achieve the goal, a comprehensive internet survey was carried out among female residents of the borough; it revealed that women considered the public sports centers, including the showers and changing rooms, dirty. It also revealed that the times scheduled for group sports (when team training was possible) were not suitable to the female residents. Another finding was that women preferred safe facilities in well-lit areas, easily accessible by public transportation.

The result: Construction of a municipal sports center for women is currently be-

ing planned. It will be located near the train station and will take into account the needs and desires expressed by the women. For instance, it will comprise two areas, one for training during fixed hours and one with flexible hours (Hasson 2012).

In **Sweden**, local authorities are responsible for providing sports services. When it was decided that the most successful national sports team in the country would be given more practice hours on the best court or field, it was discovered that this was a women's soccer team. It was also discovered that this team had been receiving fewer training and practice hours than the men's team, which was in a lower league. Subsequently, the women's soccer team was allocated additional practice hours, on the superior playing field. In addition, a new policy was instituted whereby public structures could not be rented out to sports clubs unless they could prove that they would be used equally by men's and women's teams (Hasson 2009).

An instance of clear sexual discrimination made headlines in the **Olympic games** held in London in 2012. The Japanese women's soccer team held the world title for 2011 and had a good chance for a win in London. Nevertheless, while the men's Olympic soccer team – which was far less competent and had earned far fewer awards – flew business class to London, the members of the women's team flew economy. When this became known, the Japanese public closed ranks and circulated a nation-wide petition calling for the women's team to be upgraded to business class. And indeed, after garnering the silver medal at the Olympics, the women's team flew back to Japan on business class (Topin 2012; McCurry 2012).

Conclusion

Gender inequality in sports is a well-known phenomenon with which decision-makers and participants are familiar. A government commission appointed by Minister of Culture and Sports Limor Livnat, which established the Athena Project, examined the state of women's sports in Israel and cited three major shortcomings: a discriminatory distribution of resources for men and women, the absence of clear-cut directions or long-range programs for women's sports, and the problematic image and perception of women and girls in sports (Ministry website, <http://www.mcs.gov.il/sport/pages/default.aspx>). In addition, the commission stressed the need for appropriate representation of women in decision making and as policy leaders, and the importance of providing increased opportunities for women in sports professions as judges, coaches, league directors, writers and journalists, editors of sports magazines, broadcasters, and sports commentators (<http://www.mcs.gov.il/sport/pages/default.aspx>).

From the experience of other countries, we can learn that the parity of resource distribution for men's and women's sports is a crucially important step in increasing women's presence in sports. Forty years after Title IX in the US, equality has been achieved in the number of women and men engaging in competitive sports in universities and colleges.

The equal allocation of resources must be accompanied by the implementation of gender mainstreaming in formulating sports policies, so that the needs and preferences of girls and women are taken into consideration when establishing criteria for financial assistance for sports activities and for sponsorships.

Finally, we should mention that the leading and most profitable leagues in the world reached the top after many years of significant funding. For instance the super-league of men's basketball in America, the NBA, was established in 1946; it took decades for it to reach the pinnacle of American sports (Rodan 2012). Thus when we think about promoting women in sports, we must think in terms of long-range investments.

Recommendations:

1. **Equalizing resources for women's sports and men's sports:** Stipends should be granted to women athletes, broadcasts of women's sports events should be publically financed, and subsidies should be provided for sports associations and clubs that promote women's sports.
2. **Increasing women's representation on sport club boards:** Women's representation should be increased to 40% within 5 years.
3. **Encouraging women to enter sports professions,** as coaches, judges, team managers, broadcasters, writers and newspaper and sports program editors. "Reaching out" to women should be paired with setting goals to increase women's presence in sports professions.
4. **Reexamining the criteria for funding of sports associations and clubs** to reflect the needs and experience of women.
5. **Reexamining the criteria for sponsorships** so that more sports, particularly those in which women participate, are entitled to sponsorships
6. **Changing public attitudes in general and those of young women in particular about the connection between sports and femininity in order to eliminate stereotypes:** Activities should be planned that stress the benefits of sports for women and girls for improving self-confidence, body image, and inter-personal communication, and for developing skills such as leadership, responsibility, and team work.

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Chen Schlesinger, Assistant to the Deputy Director for Marketing and Retailing, Israel Sports Betting Board, 12 June 2012

Endnotes

- 1 My sincere appreciation is extended to Yael Hasson for her assistance in writing this paper.
- 2 The Ministry of Sports and Culture decided to establish Athena in 2005, but activities began only at the end of 2007.
- 3 Team disciplines are soccer, basketball and volleyball; individual disciplines include swimming, artistic gymnastics, taekwondo, sailing, and fencing.
- 4 The Association of Schools, sports for the disabled, Paralympics, the achievement sport unit, Ayelet – Federation of Non-Olympic Sport in Israel, sports for the hearing-impaired.
- 5 Handball, soccer, volleyball, basketball.
- 6 Gymnastics, swimming, tennis, table tennis, taekwondo, triathlon, athletics, sailing, judo.
- 7 Average representation of women in sports clubs in the following branches: basketball, soccer, volleyball, handball, swimming, sailing, light athletics, tennis, gymnastics, taekwondo, judo.
- 8 Interview with Omrit Eden-Yanilov, 15 August 2011 and 22 August 2011.
- 9 Light athletics, judo, taekwondo, tennis, table tennis, triathlon, shooting, swimming, chess, sailing, cycling, boxing, wrestling, bowling, fencing, Osho-Konfu, badminton, weight-lifting, petanque, Paralympics – individual, navigation, equestrian, bowls, billiards, jiu-jitsu, golf, surfing, artistic roller-skating, ice-skating, rowing, sport climbing, trampoline, squash, alpine skiing, water skiing, body building, kayaking, model aircraft, gliding, free-fall parachuting, air gliding, general flight, karate, archery, ballroom dancing, bridge, kendo, curling, kick-boxing
- 10 Soccer, basketball, handball, volleyball, Paralympics – team, American football, water polo, rugby, baseball, softball, cricket, ice hockey, roller-skating, rope pulling
- 11 Interview with Chen Schlesinger, Assistant to the Deputy Director for Marketing and Retailing, Israel Sports Betting Board, 12 June 2012.
- 12 For instance, the Handball Administration (men and at times women), volleyball (men and at times women), Israel national basketball teams (men and women), national basketball cup (men and women), college basketball (men), the Tennis Club Authority (men and women), and the Galilee, Gilboa and Hapo'el Jerusalem men's basketball teams.
- 13 Interview with Dorit Keren Zvi, Manager of Electra Ramat Hasharon, 26 December 2011.
- 14 Symposium on Women and Sports, Tel Aviv University, 15 March 2013.

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