

Gender Balance in Sports Reporting 2026

In a nutshell



Celina Fatty

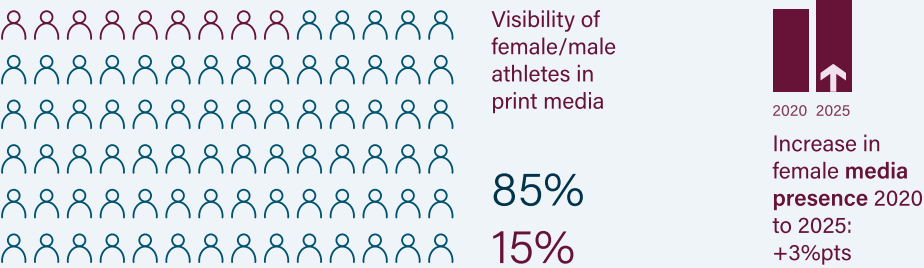
Henriett Kooszyk

Jacqueline Peychär

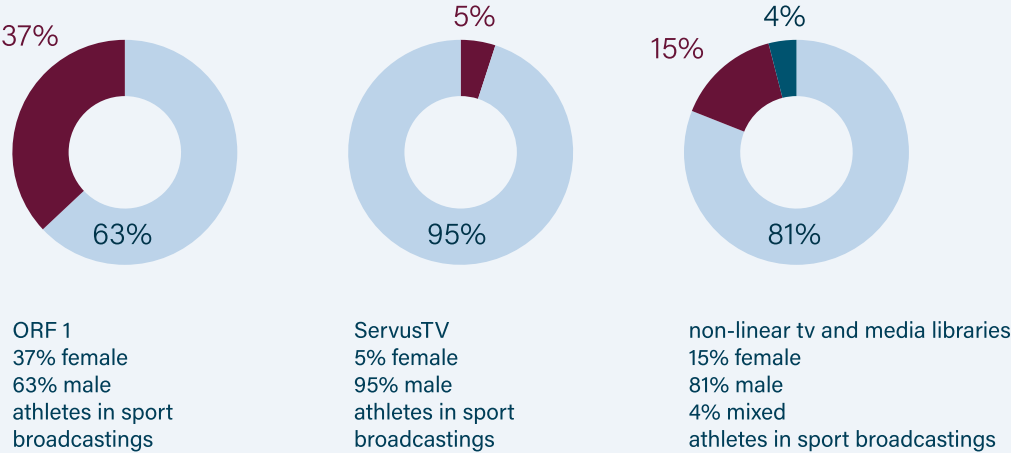
Alina Novak

In a nutshell

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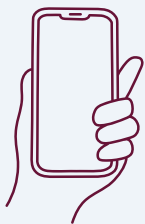
Broadcasting time female vs. male athletes linear tv and media libraries



"Simplicity instead of diversity"
in sports broadcasting



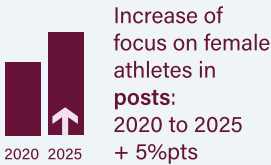
Top 5: 71 percent of total print media attention concentrates on only five sports
(football/soccer, alpine skiing, formula racing, tennis, ski jumping)



Social media postings
of media channels
(base: 23,000 posts)

88%
focus on
male athletes

12%
focus on
female athletes



In print media, male athletes are shown
10%
more often in action.

Female athletes are depicted
50%
more often in poses not related
to their sports.



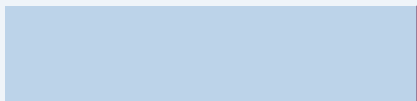
'Girls'
'Princess'

Trivialization happens
2.4 times more often
to female athletes.

Trivialization is declining, from 13% in 2020 to 5% in 2025.
However, female athletes are still affected more than twice as often.

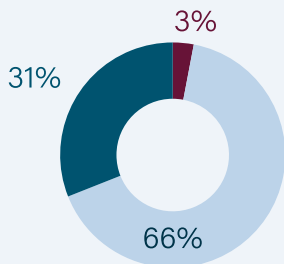
In 2020, almost 2% of
print articles on sports
were sexualizing.
In 2025, it's 0.2%.

Sexualization happens 14 times more
often to female athletes than to male
athletes.



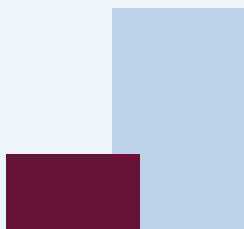
0.8%

of media coverage on sports covers para-sports and para-athletes.



Who reports on sports?

Only 3% of articles on sports are written by female editors.
One third of the articles are not named, however, or taken over from news agencies.



The sex of the author relates directly to the visibility of female athletes.

Male editors write

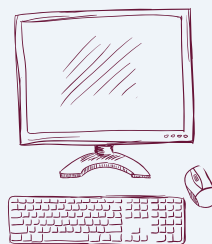
13%

of their articles on female athletes.

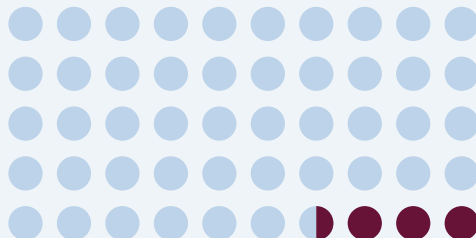
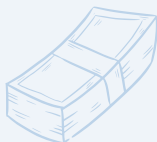
Female editors write

38%

of their articles on female athletes.



In 2019, only 7% of over-all sport sponsorings go to female sports or athletes.



When print media report on money and financial conditions in sports,

male athletes and sports are 6 times more often in the focus than female athletes or sports.

In social media about 2.5 times as often.

Executive Summary

This study examines the visibility, portrayal, and representation of athletes in the media landscape of Austria. The analysis aims to provide a well-founded assessment of how athletes are presented in high-reach media, how they are reported on, and what kind of structural differences exist in media attention. The focus lies on the extent to which women appear in sports reporting compared to men and how this relation is shaped across different media formats – from traditional print media and social media to TV broadcasts and media library offerings. In addition, the study analyzes qualitative aspects of reporting, such as the verbal description of athletes, the visual presentation, and the thematic focus of the articles.

The study is based on comprehensive media analysis covering a period of twelve months (September 1, 2024, to August 31, 2025). A total of around 40,000 reports and posts from various media formats has been evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively. The aim of this broad-based analysis is to draw as realistic a picture as possible of Austrian sports discourse and the media representation of male and female athletes.

The results of the study clearly show that sport occupies an important place in media coverage in Austria and is highly relevant to society. At the same time, however, the analysis reveals considerable differences in the visibility of female and male athletes.

In traditional sports reporting in daily newspapers, the proportion of articles about female athletes averages 15 percent. In contrast, 85 percent of reporting is about male athletes or men's sports. A similar ratio can be seen in the visual presence: 18 percent of the pictures show female athletes, while the vast majority depict men. Compared to an earlier analysis by MediaAffairs from 2020, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of women in print media (from 12 to 15 percent) – the gap to actual gender parity in sports, however, remains considerable. In this way the media image of sports is much more male-dominated than sporting events really are.

Distinct differences in the representation of women's sports also become evident between different media formats. In TV sports broadcasts, the proportion of women on ORF 1 is around 37 percent, which is due to a deliberate focus on women's soccer and winter sports, for example. In contrast, ServusTV has a share of only 5 percent women's sports. In media library offerings, the average proportion of women is around 15 percent. While individual providers show more women's sports in their on-demand offerings than in their linear programme, overall visibility remains significantly lower than that of men's sports.

On social media the presence of female athletes is again lower. Of around 23,000 posts analyzed on media channels only 12 percent were about female athletes or women's

sports, while 88 percent focused on men's sports. Interesting, however, is another detail of the analysis: Posts about female athletes achieve, on average, higher interaction rates and stronger user engagement than posts about male athletes. This suggests that there is an audience for women's sports and that the respective content is met with interest.

In addition to the gender dimension, the analysis reveals other forms of limited visibility in sports discourse. This is particularly evident in disabled sports, which account for only 0.8 percent of all sports coverage and thus remain largely invisible.

Apart from quantity issues, the study also examines the way athletes are portrayed. Overall, the results show that sports reporting is predominantly factual and respectful, with the focus usually on athletic performance. Nevertheless, differences in diction can be found. While male athletes are more often described with attributes of dominance, strength, or aggressiveness, female athletes are more often highlighted for their emotional characteristics. In addition, women are more often trivialized in their portrayal – for example, through terms such as “girls” or by trivializing or devaluing their performance.

Although such forms of trivialization are relatively rare overall, they affect female athletes about 2.5 times more often than male athletes. Sexualization is declining overall in tradi-

tional print reporting but continues to relate to women predominantly.

Striking differences are also found in the imagery used. Men are more often depicted in situations of active competition while female athletes more often appear in passive or posed pictures – in portraits or file photos without sport context, for example. Although female athletes are relatively slightly more visible in pictures than in text, this effect is offset by their significantly lower overall presence in reporting.

Another structural finding concerns the authorship of sports reporting, i.e. the sports editorial offices. Only about 3 percent of sports articles are written by female journalists, while the majority of articles is written by male authors. A distinct correlation can be found between the gender of the editor and the focus of the content: Female journalists report significantly more often on female athletes (38 percent) than their male colleagues (13 percent). Nevertheless, the influence of female sports editors on the overall result remains limited due to the low proportion of female authors.

The study uses comprehensive data to substantiate the fact that media coverage of sport in Austria continues to be heavily male-dominated and that the visibility of female athletes remains at a comparatively low level across almost all media formats examined. At the same time, individual developments indi-

cate that the issue of media visibility for women's sports is being given greater priority in the media and in the sports business – like the increased presence and coverage of women's sports, more women's sports on front pages, rising interaction rates for social media posts about female athletes, and a specific focus of certain programmes by individual broadcasting companies. In any case, the media play a central role in the perception, appreciation, and development of sport. At the same time the visibility of female athletes should never be seen as the sole responsibility of the media – clubs and sports structures, politics, and, last but not least, the economy, sports sponsorship, and sports consumers all have leverage in this regard.