



ROWING IRELAND

WOMEN IN ROWING STRATEGY

JULY • 2020



**ROWING
IRELAND**

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1. Introduction

Rowing Ireland is committed to increasing women's sustained involvement in the sport as coaches, volunteers, club members, officials, leaders, and participants, from grassroots to elite performance.

In 2019, Rowing Ireland received funding from Sport Ireland to support the growth of women's involvement in the sport. Part of this funding has been used to create a new role in the organisation of Women in Sport Lead. This funding will primarily support and grow female participation in the sport, with a particular emphasis on women coaching and officiating in rowing in Ireland.

This document reviews the current state of play of gender equality across the sport of rowing in Ireland and outlines plans and initiatives to achieve our short- and long-term goals.

Women in Sport Lead

The purpose of the role is to project manage and ensure the implementation of current and future programmes, while developing strong relationships and providing expertise and support to the grassroots clubs in the area of women's and girls' rowing.

Rowing Ireland Strategy

This Women in Rowing Strategy sits within the following objectives of the Rowing Ireland Strategy.

1. Supporting Clubs
2. Rowing for all, a sport for life

2. Where are we now?

Before we assess what needs to be done, we must understand how we are performing in gender balance and gender equality in our sport. We need to know in what aspects we are succeeding and where we need to do better.

This section reviews Rowing Ireland's performance of gender balance in each of Sport Ireland's Women in Sport target areas:

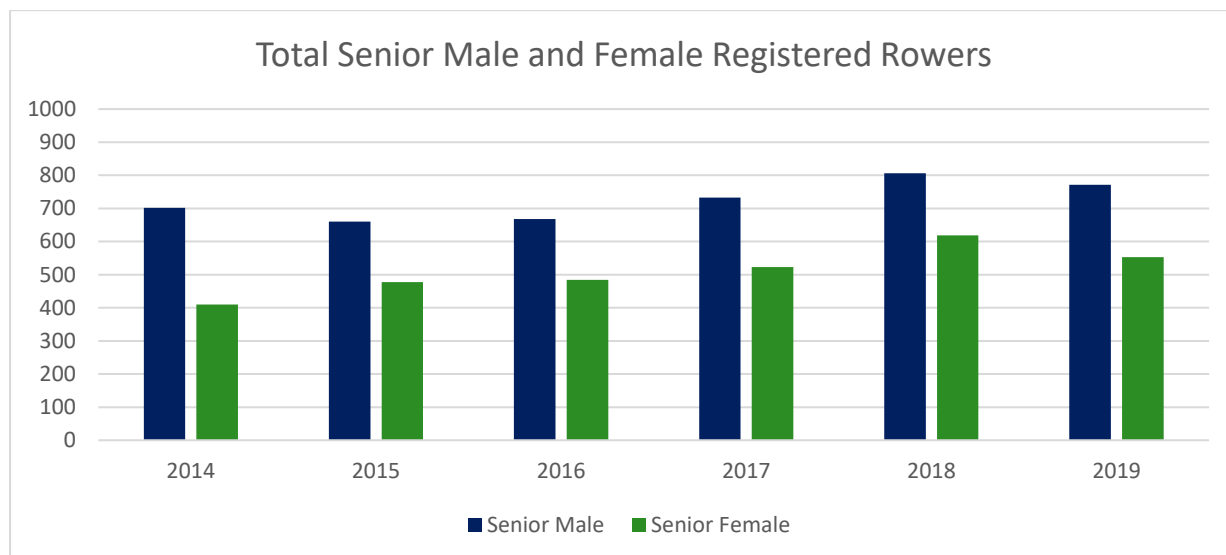
- Participation
- Coaching and Officiating
- Leadership
- Visibility.

2.1. Participation

Rowing Ireland has progressed in recent years in achieving gender balance at Junior and Senior level. From rower registration on tracker, the ratio of Senior rowers 58% male and 42% female in 2019. Junior rowers were 53% male and 47% female. At recreational level*, the participation has a greater total number of females with 86 recreational rowers registered, 66% of these are female. The focus of participation is to grow the numbers rowing with gender parity, ensuring the sport is appealing to both boys and girls, men and women.

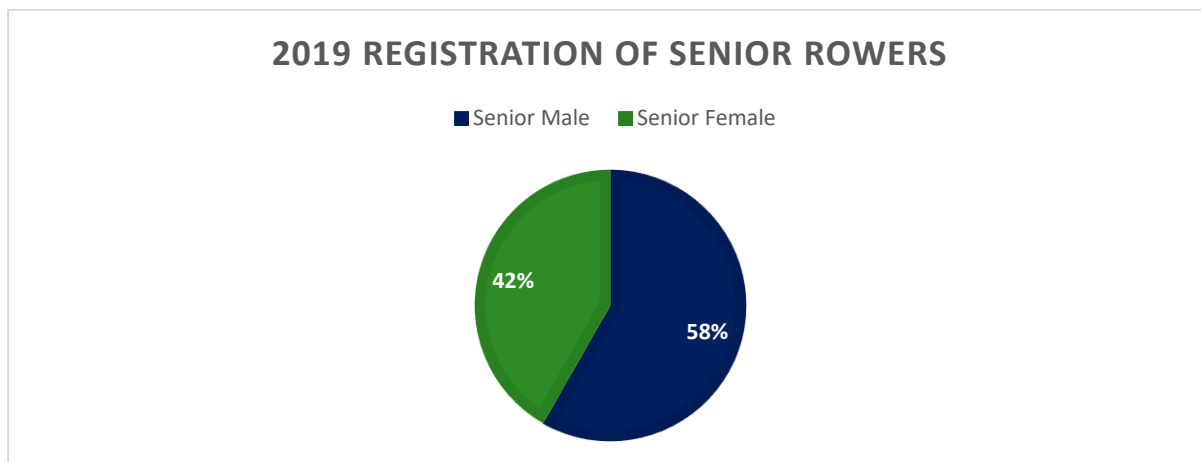
Senior 2014-2019

Figure 1: Number of registered senior male and female rowers from 2014-2019 (Tracker)



* This is most likely not a true reflection of recreational rower numbers as recreational rowers are unlikely to register through tracker.

Figure 2: The percentage split of senior male and female rowers in 2019



Junior 2014-2019

Figure 3: Number of registered junior male and female rowers from 2014-2019 (Tracker)

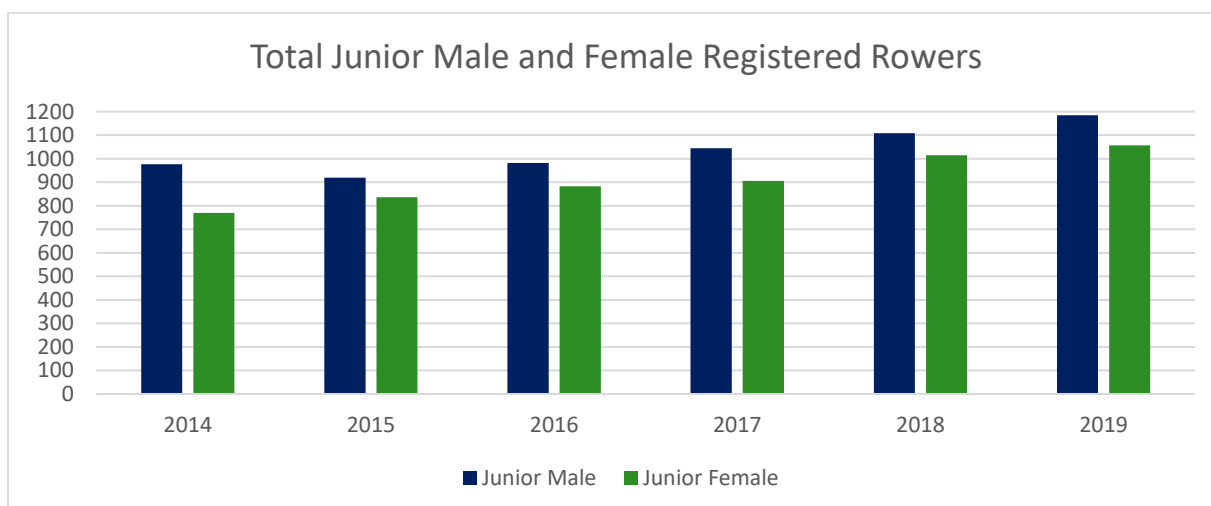


Figure 4: The percentage split of Junior male and female rowers in 2019

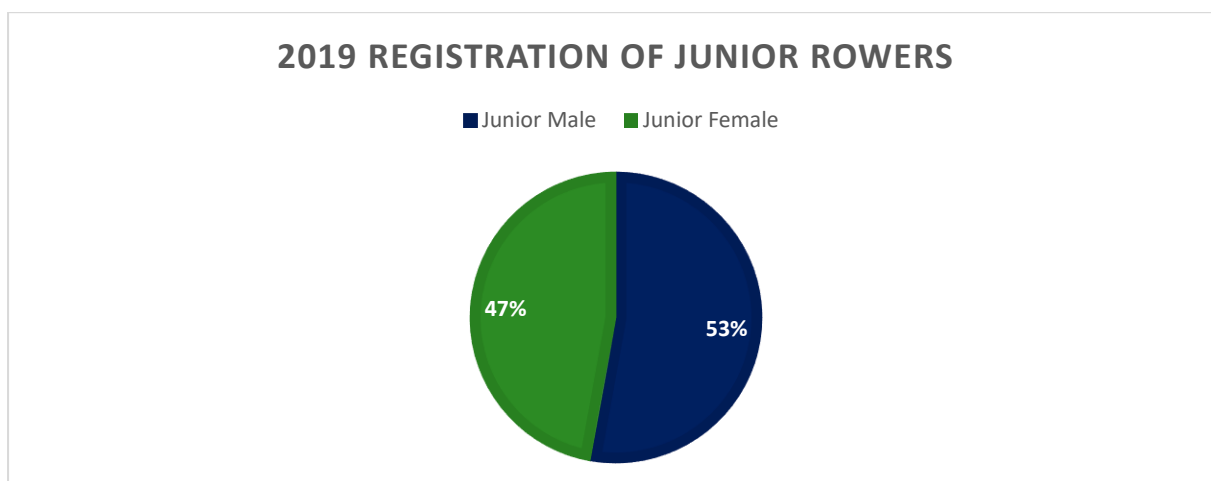


Figure 5 : Breakdown of numbers registered on tracker from 2014 to 2019

Season	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total People	2977	3042	3243	3441	3776	3796
Total Club*	72	70	81	74	76	69
Rower	2858	2894	3016	3207	3549	3565
Rower Adult	1112	1138	1152	1256	1425	1324
Rower Adult Male	63%	58%	58%	58%	57%	58%
Rower Adult Female	37%	42%	42%	42%	43%	42%
Rower Junior	1746	1756	1864	1951	2124	2241
Rower Junior Male	56%	52%	53%	54%	52%	53%
Rower Junior Female	44%	48%	47%	46%	48%	47%
Recreational	0	8	63	88	85	86
Recreational Adult	0	7	62	88	85	86
Recreational Adult Male	0%	43%	60%	27%	40%	34%
Recreational Adult Female	0%	57%	40%	73%	60%	66%
Recreational Junior	0	1	1	0	0	0
Recreational Junior Male	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Recreational Junior Female	0%	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%

* The variance in the number of affiliated clubs is affected by one-off affiliation of school rowing clubs for the school championships. This has been taking into account and double counting of participants in this case, has been avoided.

2.2. Coaching

It is more difficult to capture the gender balance of our club coaching base. There is no mandatory obligation to register as a coach on tracker, nor to report to Rowing Ireland whether you are a practicing coach for that season.

A number of methods have been used to report the split of male and female coaches.

- Coach education courses
- Coaching survey completed in February
- HP Coaching Team (Professional Coaches)
- Qualification lists of Coach Tutors

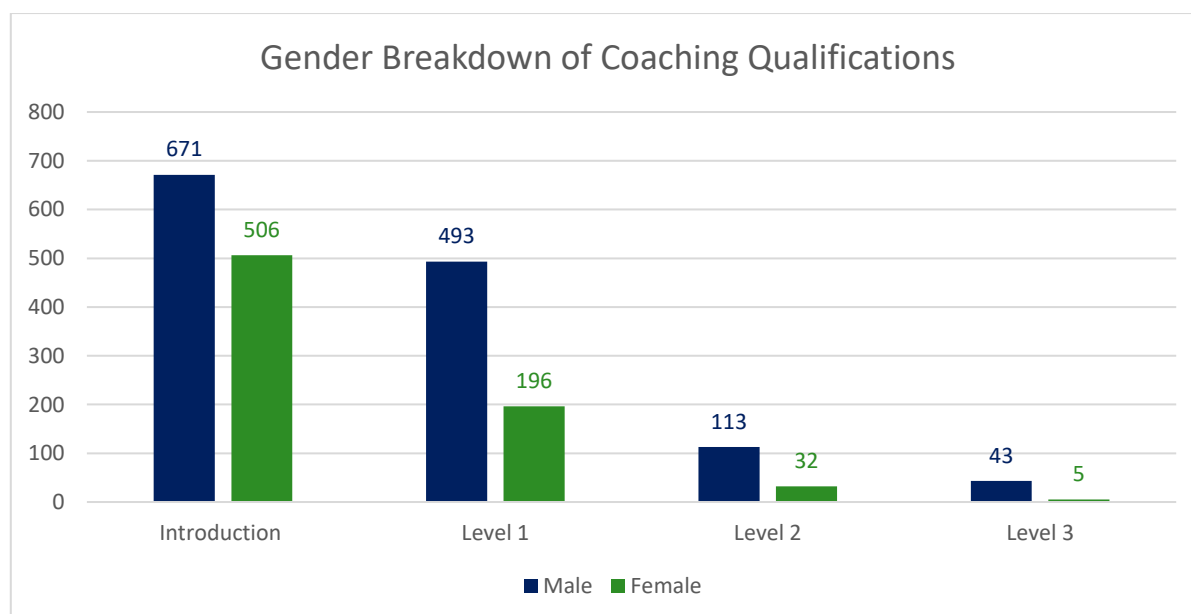
Coach Education Courses

The follow figures show the all-time figures for the completion of the coach education courses, since their development in 1997.

Figure 6: Coach Education Course Attendees (1997 - 2019)

All-time Level Coaching Courses Attendees			
	Male	Female	Ratio
Introduction	671	506	1.3
Level 1	493	196	2.5
Level 2	113	32	3.5
Level 3	43	5	10

Figure 7: Gender Breakdown of Coaching Qualifications



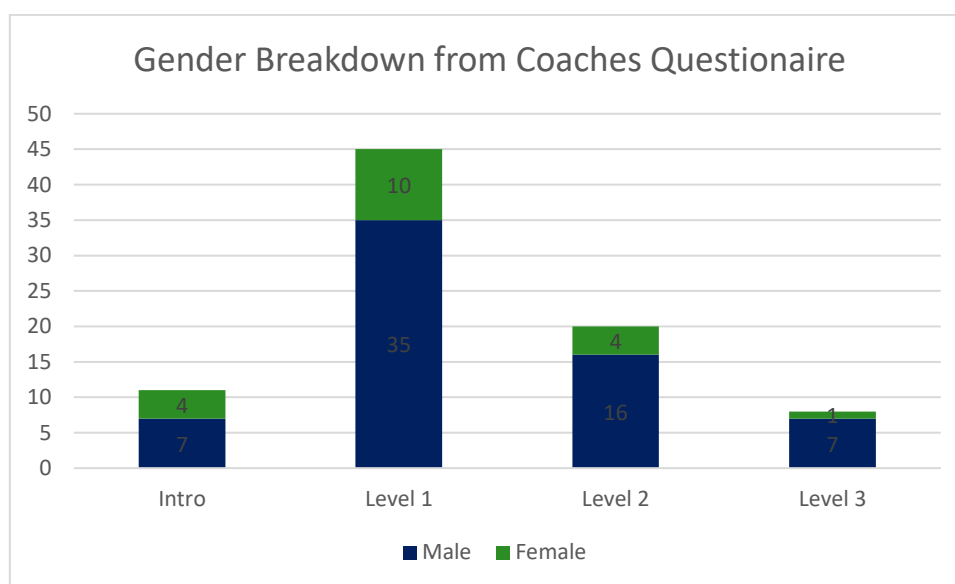
Coaches Questionnaire

A survey was circulated to clubs in Feb 2020 for the attention of club coaches. This gives a better reflection on current gender breakdown of coaches, although not reflective of entire coaching community as not every coach completed it. 124 coaches did complete the survey and the level of coaching qualifications is broken down as follows.

Figure 8: Coaching Survey, coach qualification

Coach Questionnaire			
	Male	Female	Ratio
Total	89	35	2.5
Introduction to Coaching	7	4	1.8
Level 1	35	10	3.5
Level 2	16	4	4
Level 3	7	1	7
No qualification but helping with coaching	24	16	

Figure 9: Gender Breakdown of coaching qualifications from Coaches Questionnaire.



Although the survey is a selection of coaches who voluntarily completed it, the result shows similar trends; there is a greater disparity in gender as the coaching qualifications progress.

High Performance Coaching Team

Currently there are no female coaches as part of the High-Performance Team at Senior or Under 23 international level. This follows a similar trend internationally.

A survey carried out across European Rowing Federations showed that only 18% of club coaches are women and only 16% of coaches at National Training Centres are women.

Coach Tutor Workforce

Tutors deliver coach education courses as part of the Rowing Ireland coach education programme. 22 tutors have been conducting training since Coach Education Courses began in Ireland. Of the 22 trained tutors, 6 tutors are female. Currently we have 7 active tutors, of which 3 are female.

Coaching Perspectives

Sport Ireland carried out a Women in Coaching Survey in June 2020. 61 female active rowing coaches and 19 ex-rowing coaches completed the survey.

Respondents were asked to capture some of the key phrases as to what motivated them and what challenges they faced as coaches. Some key themes emerged from rowing coaches, as follows:

Motivations: To give back to the club;

Seeing kids enjoy themselves / develop / achieve goals;

Bringing the sport that I live to as many people as possible;

Seeing the commitment / enthusiasm of the rowers;

Being a positive role model.

Challenges: Lack of respect from fellow coaches / administrators / parents / athletes – gender and age bias, male dominated sport;

Time due to a variety of reasons;

Lack of knowledge / experience – “am I teaching the right technique”;

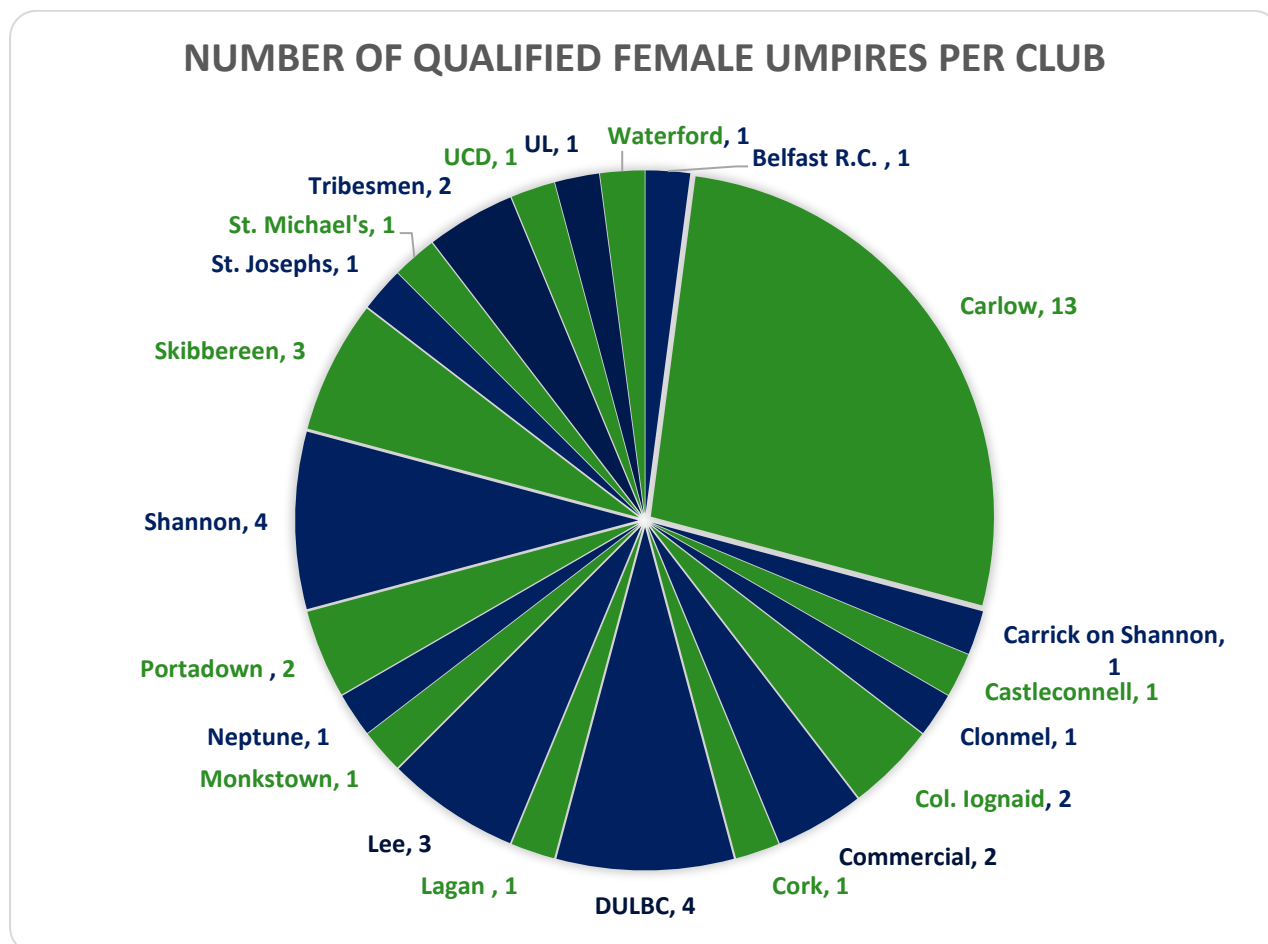
Lack of support from club / parents;

Politics within club and sport.

2.3. Umpires

Of the 68 River Rowing Clubs affiliated with Rowing Ireland, 22 clubs have one or more qualified female umpires.

Figure 10: Number of qualified female umpires per club, 2020



The gender breakdown of umpires in Ireland is 78% male and 22% female.

Rowing Ireland has one female international umpire and three male international umpires.

In Feb 2020, a survey of female umpires was completed. Of the 48 female umpires qualified in 2019, 29 responded to the survey. The following were findings of the survey:

- Of those qualified, nearly all have umpired at regattas post qualification.
- Majority of female umpires state their reason for completing the training was due to the club demands for umpires at regattas.
- 32 Rowing Ireland clubs are involved in organising regattas each year, 17 of which have a qualified female umpire as a member of the club.
- 5 umpires expressed interest in progressing towards umpiring internationally.

2.4. Leadership

Rowing Ireland appointed their first female CEO in 2018. There is a total of 66 National Governing Bodies in Irish Sport, Rowing Ireland is one of five National Governing Bodies with a female CEO.

As of March 2020, the board of Rowing Ireland has 55% female representation. There is no gender specification on the board at present as the board is elected by clubs through the provincial branches.

Rowing Ireland has demonstrated gender diversity in leadership roles in the organisation.

In 2020, the gender breakdown of club secretaries is 39 males and 33 females, a ratio of 1.2 to 1. The gender breakdown of club captains is 59 males and 15 females, a ratio of 3.8 to 1.

*The discrepancy between total no. of secretaries and total no. of captains, is due to one club having a joint captaincy.

2.5. Visibility

Visibility refers to the media coverage of our male and female athletes, coaches and leaders. This can be a difficult target to monitor. Visibility of rowing as a sport has increased massively since the last Olympiad and rowing continues to get more coverage with the success of the team. Whilst we do not have quantitative data of this target, it is reasonable to assume that the visibility of both our male and female athletes has been neutral to gender bias.

Summary

Participation of rowing in Ireland is performing well in terms of gender balance. The balance at Senior level is behind the balance at Junior level, but in both cases show a positive trend. The decline in membership post junior, needs to be addressed for both male and female athletes.

Leadership and governance in rowing at an organisational level is performing very well with a gender balance board and female CEO; a policy on gender equality may be helpful to maintain this status.

Visibility of female rowing role models is increasing due to the success of the High-Performance national rowing team. With three female athletes currently qualified for Tokyo, and a potential for more, there is great opportunity to capitalise on the visibility of our female athletes.

The areas in our sport where we need to improve the gender balance is in our coaching and officiating.

Coaching shows the gender gap increasing through the levels of coach qualification. The majority of female coaches are coaching at beginners and

grassroots level. The high performance/national coaching team has no female coaches, which follows a similar trend in other national rowing teams.

The number of female umpires is considerably lower than the number of males, with a ratio of 4 males to 1 female. Of the clubs which are involved in hosting regattas, just over half have a female qualified umpire within the club.

There is not sufficient data at this time to fairly assess the situation in coastal and offshore rowing.

3. Why does it matter?

Women in coaching and officiating in sport is on the agenda from a National and European level.

The EU guidance for sport, derived from the [Gender Equality in Sport, Proposal for Strategic Actions](#) (February, 2014) identifies the following targets for women coaches:

- Women as volunteer and employed coaches should be 40% of the coaching workforce.
- Women as coaches should be 30% of all the national team coaches.

At a national level, Sport Ireland has set, through its National Sports Policy, an overarching target of equal participation in sport by 2027. The [Women in Sport Policy](#) has outlined more general objectives under Coaching and Officiating.

- To broaden the coaching base to include more women from grassroots to high performance
- To increase the number of women officiating and refereeing

Beyond the targets set at EU and national level, there are many recognised benefits to increasing female coaches and officiators:

- Increased female coaching role models for young female rowers, will encourage them to move into coaching or sport administration roles beyond their time as an athlete.
- A diverse coaching team will relate to a broader reach of athletes and help with retention. Whilst some athletes may work better with male coaches, others with female, or just with those with a similar background. The more diverse the coaching team, the more athletes will be accommodated.
- More women coaches mean more coaches.
- Diversity of minds coming together can bring more solutions, as every individual brings their own way of thinking, operating and problem solving.
- Diversity brings different talents and different skill to a team that others can learn from.

To realise these benefits, we see the need to set targets for our sport and actively implement strategies to increase the number of female coaches and officiators in rowing.

4. Goals and objectives

The following table outlines the goals of Rowing Ireland's Women in Sport Program.

Long term	<p>Achieve gender balance in all aspects of the sport of rowing in Ireland – participation, coaching, officiating, governance and coverage.</p> <p>To be regarded as an exemplar of gender equality in sport, across Ireland and by the international rowing community.</p>
Medium term (3-5 years)	<p>Increase the number of women in coaching to 35% of the total number of coaches.</p> <p>Double the number of women with Level 3 qualifications and/or lead coaching roles.</p> <p>Sustain a positive year on year growth rate of female coaches.</p> <p>For all clubs involved in hosting their own regatta to have a minimum of one qualified female umpire per club.</p>
Short term (1-2 years)	<p>To have a clear and comprehensive reporting system for maintaining records of the gender balance of participation, coaching, officiating and governance in rowing across Ireland.</p> <p>For every club to have a full understanding of Rowing Ireland's long-term goal of equal gender balance across the sport of rowing.</p> <p>To develop, pilot and roll out a number of initiatives focusing on recruitment, development and retention of women in coaching and officiating roles. (as outlined in the next section)</p> <p>For all female coaches and umpires in Ireland to feel supported and encouraged by Rowing Ireland in their coaching/officiating and professional development.</p>

5. Rowing Ireland Women in Sport Initiatives

5.1. Rowing Ireland Women in Coaching Strategy

There are 3 areas of focus for our Women in Coaching Strategy:

- Recruit: To increase the number of females coming into coaching.
- Develop: Enable existing coaches to develop their technical and personal skills to become a better coach
- Retain: Ensure that female coaches have the support and maintain their desire to stay within coaching.

The following tables outline planned initiatives to be delivered by the Rowing Ireland Women in Sport Programme by Q2 of 2021.

Recruit

Task	Aim	Deliverable
Club Coach Development/ Dry Land Warriors	Recruit and introduce new volunteers to the club through a club programme delivered by a female club mentor.	Develop a club programme that can be used for the recruitment and integration of new volunteers into a club. Deliver training to a nominated 'club coach mentor' to run the program within their club.
Introduction to Coaching for University Women's Rowing Clubs	Introduce more female rowers to coaching, increase the chance that some will transition to coaching beyond their athletic careers.	Deliver the Introduction to Coaching Courses to the University Rowing Clubs around the country.
Get Rowing@ Uni	Introduce more girls to rowing at university level and upskill existing university rowers in the delivery of a beginner's rowing program.	Establish Get Going...Get Rowing at rowing universities.

Develop

Task	Aim	Deliverable
HP Coaching Pathway	Provide supports to enable female coaches to realise their full coaching potential.	Deliver a programme of supports to female coaches from coach education, personal development and HP coach support.
Annual Coaching Workshop	Deliver a concentrated weekend of coach education and development for female club coaches.	A weekend workshop with guest coaches to share insight and coaching techniques, on and off the water.
Shared educational resources	Improve the confidence and coach education of existing female coaches through coach education and relevant resources.	Deliver or share webinars, coaching resources and articles to support coach development.

Retain

Task	Aim	Deliverable
Women in Coaching (WiC) Regional Networks	Provide a support group for female coaches in the different regions. Create a space where coaches can discuss challenges/share ideas and experiences/give advice and boost confidence.	Establish Women in Coaching Networks nationwide, encourage coach collaboration and support coach education topics delivered through the networks.
National Event - Women in Coaching Network	Bring the coaches of the WiC networks together for a national event. Giving the opportunity to expand their coaching network beyond their region.	Have a national event where the regional networks come together for a single event, with dinner and guest speaker(s).
Coach Reporting	Establish a clear, comprehensive reporting system of club coaching numbers and gender balance of our coaching base.	Implement a reporting system for club coaches, through an annual coach survey, coach education courses and club affiliation.
Raise awareness and visibility of female coaches	Highlight role models in the sport and encourage more females to become involved in coaching.	Continuous promotion of Women in Coaching through our social media and club communication e.g. Women in Coaching Spotlight.

5.2. Rowing Ireland Women in Umpiring Strategy

There are 3 areas of focus for our Women in Umpiring Strategy:

- Recruit: To increase the number of females completing their umpiring qualification.
- Develop: Enable existing umpires to develop their skills across all umpiring roles
- Retain: Ensure that female umpires have the support and maintain the desire to stay within umpiring.

The following tables outline planned initiatives to be delivered by the Rowing Ireland Women in Sport Programme

Recruit

Task	Aim	Deliverable
Umpire Qualification Recruitment Drive	Increase the number of female qualified umpires	Encourage female club members to complete the umpire training and qualification for the 2021 qualification period.
Awareness Campaign in Clubs	Encourage clubs to assess the gender balance of their qualified club umpires and to put forward club members for the training and qualification	Communication and advertising campaign to encourage female club members to complete the umpire training

Develop

Task	Aim	Deliverable
Umpire Mentoring	Ensure those who complete the umpiring qualification begin actively umpiring that season	Work with the newly qualified umpires (2020/21) to ensure they have a suitable mentor to support them at their first regatta and build confidence.
Pathway to International Umpiring Qualification	Increase number of Irish female international umpires	Work with umpiring committee to develop a pathway for females to prepare for FISA Umpiring Exams and work towards umpiring internationally.
Skills development	Ensure female umpires develop skills across an array of officiating roles	Work with the umpiring committee to develop method for upskilling umpires across different umpiring roles.

Retain

Task	Aim	Deliverable
Support and Recognition for Volunteer Umpires	Give recognition and increase visibility of female umpires	Highlight women in umpiring roles through social media and club communications.
Reporting on no. of female umpires at regattas	Have accurate figures for numbers and gender of active umpires at regattas.	Develop a reporting method to collect data for the numbers of males/females officiating at regattas. Develop an annual survey for umpires to monitor progress and experiences.

6. Conclusion

This Rowing Ireland Women in Rowing Strategy outlines Rowing Ireland's ambition in achieving equal gender balance in every aspect of our sport.

We have completed a review of our current performance and set specific targets and goals to improve, where it is needed.

A number of strategies have been outlined to recruit, develop and retain females in coaching and officiating and we aim to implement them over the next year. This document acts as a starting point and the plans and programmes may evolve as we develop, pilot and implement them. We are continuously open to feedback on what works and what doesn't work and how we can make the biggest strides towards the overall goal of gender equality in every aspect of our sport.