

Gender equality leads to more Olympic medals for men and women

September 30 2014



An examination of medal counts from the London 2012 and Sochi 2014 Olympic Games found that nations with greater gender equality had both men and women reach the podium more often. Credit: J. Azpiri

Gender equality boosts a country's Olympic medal count for both women and men, shows a new study from the University of British Columbia.

Drawing data from the World Economic Forum's 2013 Global Gender Gap Report, researchers compared a country's tendency toward sexual equality with its medal counts from the London 2012 Olympic Games and the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games.

Countries with greater parity – particularly for measures of educational equality – had more women and men reach the podium.

"Our study makes apparent that gender equality has a tendency to lift everyone up within a country," says Jennifer Berdahl, a Sauder School of Business professor and the study's lead author. "Olympic glory is likely only one example of how whole societies can benefit from greater parity between the sexes."

The researchers analyzed a sample of 121 countries and their medal counts from the London and Sochi Games. To ensure the significance of the impact of gender equality, they isolated it from other factors such as [income equality](#), gross domestic product, population and latitude.

"Amazingly, gender equality was the most significant and robust predictor of a country's Olympic success after [gross domestic product](#)," notes Berdahl, who is Sauder's Montalbano Professor of Leadership Studies: Women and Diversity.

Berdahl suggests that [gender stereotypes](#) may limit the number of women and men viewed as potential high performance athletes, ultimately reducing a nation's talent pool.

"In societies with rigid gender roles, women are encouraged to be demure and men who are considered feminine are selected out early when it comes to sport," says Berdahl. "When there's more equality, performance rises to the surface as the prime indicator of who should advance to elite levels of athletics."

More information: The study, Win-win: Female and male athletes from more gender equal nations perform better in international sports competitions, will be published in the January edition of *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Gender equality leads to more Olympic medals for men and women (2014, September 30) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-09-gender-equality-olympic-medals-men.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.