

# DIVERSITY WITHIN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



@SummusSports

## **Diversity within the Olympic movement in the United Kingdom**

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### **Executive Summary**

With the exception of a small number of highly diverse and accessible sports, the funding model for Olympic sports is reaffirming the racial and socio-economic prejudices seen in our social and educational systems. As a result, there is a strong bias towards white, privately educated athletes in a large number of sports that receive significant funding under the National Lottery, UK Sport distributed program. Due to the short-term pressures to win medals, funding is primarily spent on boosting Britain's competitive advantage in sports that are particularly dependent on specialised and expensive equipment. Funding these sports and reaffirming the socio-economic advantages of the elite has come at the expense of diversity at an elite level and at the cost of funding more widely played and accessible sports such as basketball.

Suggestions as a result of this report are three-fold:

1. Short term – diversity and inclusion to become a formal consideration for sports to receive National Lottery funding.
2. Short term - invest in accelerator programs to increase the chances of success for non-white, comprehensively educated athletes in sports that show significant biases against them.
3. Long term - survey the accessibility of each sport that receives funding and mitigate access-restrictions or evaluate the value of its continued inclusion in publicly funded programs.

Our commitment as an organisation in this space:

1. We will use our influence within the industry and work with the athletes that we represent and their partners to facilitate accelerator programs in the areas where they are needed most.
2. Continue to share information and to prioritise purpose, equality and diversity at the heart of every athlete strategy and partnership.

### **Introduction**

The aim of this report is to share information on the diversity of the British Olympic team, or Team GB as it's more commonly known. It recognises the significant success of Team GB, and therefore National Lottery funding distribution by UK Sport, in recent Olympic Games. UK Sport funding has helped Team GB rise from 36th place to 2nd place in the Olympic medal table over the last 20 years (gov.uk, 2019). This report does not look to challenge the effectiveness of the system but the fairness of it. It focuses on both race and socio-economic background and provides figures and thoughts on UK Sport's Olympic funding

model; UK Sport is the entity responsible for distributing government funding into Olympic and Paralympic sport. This funding model is supported by the National Lottery and is directly linked to a sports success at the Olympic Games (UK Sport, n.d.). This report was created in light of recent events in an attempt to help educate and drive a conversation around diversity within Olympic sports.

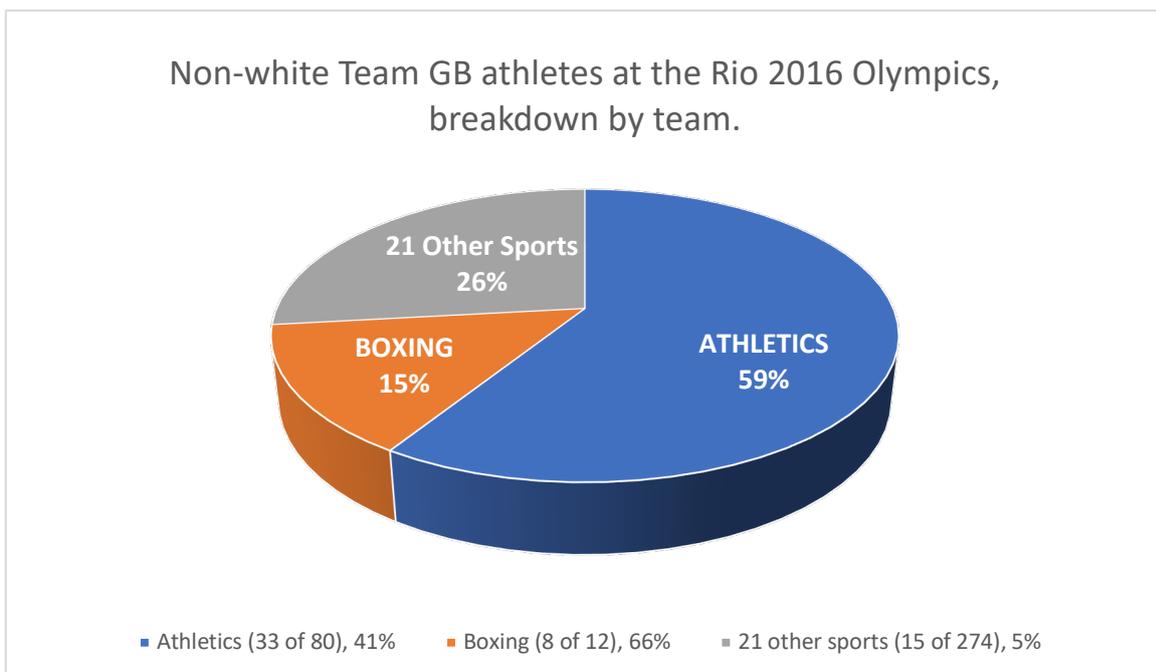
The report focuses on two key areas. Firstly, it explores the racial diversity of Team GB at the Rio 2016 Summer Olympic Games. It looks at this on both a holistic team and an individual sport level, focusing primarily on those sports that show bias towards white participants. Secondly, it explores the impact of an athlete's socio-economic background on their ability to both reach and medal at an Olympic Games, with access to private education being the primary indicator of an athlete's socio-economic background.

The report draws data from existing research papers and expands and provides commentary on the information cited and related topics.

### **Race and Team GB**

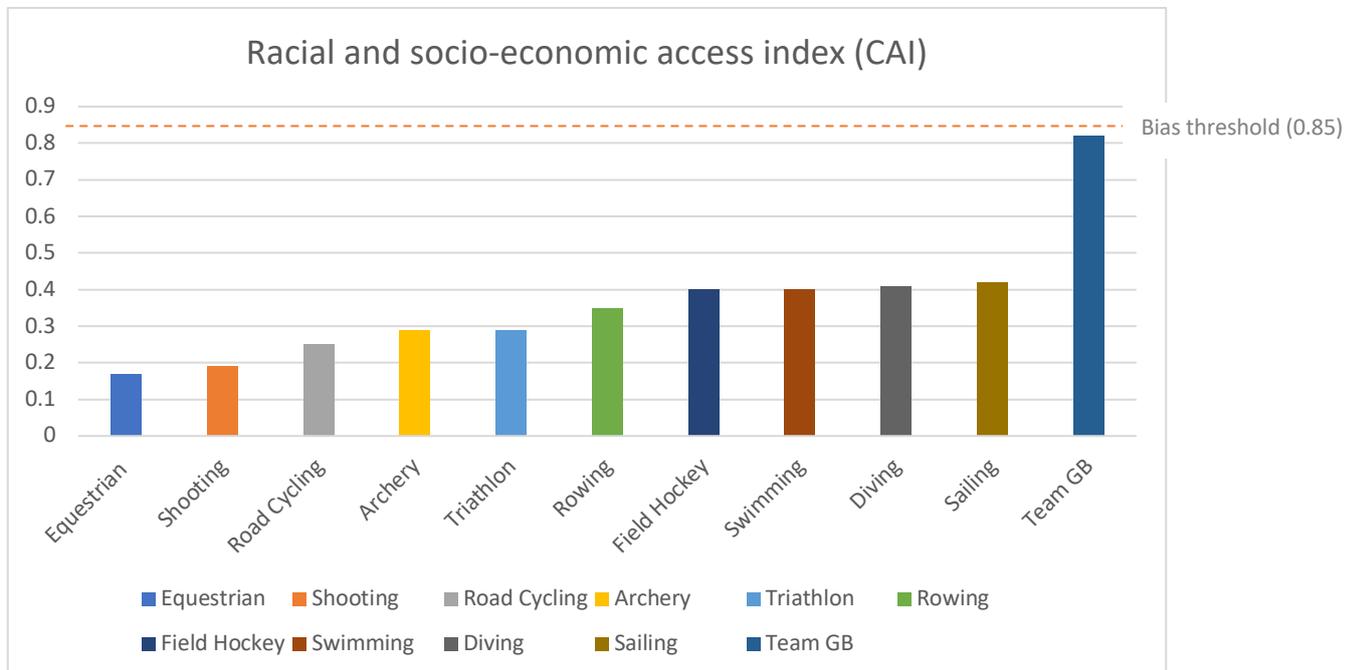
To best understand the data provided one must firstly understand the population of the United Kingdom. The prevalence of white individuals in United Kingdom was estimated at 82.3% based on a combined proportional prevalence of 2011 census data from England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Lawrence, 2017).

Team GB took 366 athletes to the Rio Olympic Games in 2016. From the total 310 were white (85%), 56 were non-white (15%). Of the 23 sports that represented Team GB 16 sports were made up of only white athletes. Of the 56 non-white athletes 33 came from athletics and 8 came from boxing (Lawrence, 2017).



Excluding these two sports a total of 15 non-white athletes were selected in the remaining 21 sports which included a total of 274 athletes, that's a representation of just over 5% (BBC, 2016).

More than half of the sports that formed part of the 2016 Team GB contingent showed a significant bias towards white, privately educated athletes when plotted on the race socio-economic access index\* (CAI) (Lawrence, 2017). The combined race socio-economic access index was developed and modified from the College Access Index (NY Times, 2017) to describe the racial and socio-economic distribution of each sport and team relative to the general population. A score of 1 indicates a team perfectly reflective of the general population. A score of under 0.85 has arbitrarily been picked as showing a notable bias towards white, privately educated athletes (Lawrence, 2017). The below graph highlights the 10 sports with the lowest CAI score alongside the average CAI score for Team in 2016 as a whole.



There were 161 athletes that made up these 10 teams. When you add the other cycling teams, mountain bike, BMX and track, to this number it totals 179 athletes. Of those 2 (1.12%) were non-white athletes, one in rowing and one in field hockey, none were black. Cycling and swimming both had 26 person teams made up completely of white athletes (BBC, 2016).

These 179 athletes returned 84 athlete medal winners, over half of Team GB's total (BBC, 2016). As a result of their successes these sports were significantly funded for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic cycle. Cumulatively these sports have accounted for £164 million in funding in the run up to the Tokyo Olympics, that accounts for 63% of the funding pot (UK Sport, n.d.). Rowing (£30m), cycling (£29.6m) and swimming (£22.4m) are the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> highest funded Olympic sports. Between them they sent 1 non-white athlete to the Olympic Games in 2016 (BBC, 2016). Athletics is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest funded sport (£26.9m) and as noted above sent 33 non-white athletes to the Olympics.

UK Sport's investment principles "have been refined to reflect the evolution of our investment approach". A 9 page principle document titled "Tokyo Investment Principles" highlights the purpose and principles for funding makes no mention of diversity or inclusion as a criteria or motivation for funding (UK Sport, 2015), as such it can be reasonably assumed that the diversity numbers for the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympic Games will be consistent with those of Rio in 2016. An organisation tasked with the distribution of key public funds that shows such a clear lack of diversity within its athlete body, needs to prioritise diversity and inclusion in both its purpose and its principles and needs to proactively address the issues highlighted.

### **Private Schooling and Team GB**

In terms of pupil distribution, the general spread across the education spectrum in the United Kingdom is 7% private, 5% grammar and 88% comprehensive. Comparatively 31% of Team GB's Rio 2016 medallists attended private schools, compared with 59% that were comprehensively educated (The Sutton Trust, 2019).

In comparison to this men's football only has 5% of its body educated privately (The Sutton Trust, 2019). Developed professional sports, such as football, have professional dominated club and league structures. Such pathways to the top of the sport are not dependent on school or university structures and as such we see much more diverse, representative professional bodies.

Many sports, particularly those with a history of amateur participation included in the Olympic Games, depend on school or university competition as a step on their talent pathway. A lot of this comes down to access with many sports requiring specialist equipment or facilities resulting in an exclusive participant base. Such sports include rowing, sailing and equestrian. The end result of this dependence on the school system is that sport, particularly those associated with the Olympic movement in United Kingdom, begin to reflect the racial and socio-economic inequality of the private school system (The Sutton Trust, 2019).

Team GB have seen significant progress in 'sitting down sports' such as rowing, cycling, sailing and equestrianism, since the implementation of National Lottery funding (The Guardian, 2016). They involve specialised and expensive equipment and facilities and are sports that show a direct correlation between investment and success. They are also historically associated with higher social classes and private education. This is reflected in the fact that an Old Etonian has won a medal in a 'sitting down' sport at every Summer Olympic Games since 1992 (The Sutton Trust, 2019).

Many of the Olympic sports that Team GB excel at remain dominated by the privately educated. For instance, over half (52%) of the medal winning rowers from Team GB in 2016 attended fee-paying schools, along with 50% of the winning women's hockey team (The Sutton Trust, 2019).

It should be noted that as a percentage of the overall body, there is a greater correlation between attending a private school and winning an Olympic medal (31%) than there is in, becoming a member of parliament (29%), becoming a member of the Sunday Times Rich List (28%) or becoming a FTSE 350 CEO (27%) (The Sutton Trust, 2019).

## **Conclusion**

The impact of race and education within the Olympic movement in the United Kingdom is a complex issue that varies across sports. The data shows that for the majority of sports and, as a result, for Team GB as a whole, white, privately educated individuals have a higher chance of both making an Olympic Games and winning a medal.

Specific sports, such as Equestrian, shooting, triathlon, archery and rowing, demonstrated bias towards white and privately educated athletes. This bias is clearly a result of both the sports' dependence on the private schooling system and its relative social status, due to the specialisation and cost of equipment and facilitates.

Conversely athletics, boxing, taekwondo, and gymnastics demonstrated bias favouring non-white and non-privately educated athletes. This is no doubt in part down to the accessibility and affordability of the sports, but we must also be mindful of cultural influences on sports participation across race. Finance, as a barrier to participation and development in sport, on the other hand, should be scrutinised more fully. Cost and access to facilities are well-documented barriers to sport participation and advancement at every level.

The conclusions are clear. With the exception of a small number of highly diverse and accessible sports, UK Sport funding of Olympic sports acts to reaffirming the socio-economic advantages and racial prejudices seen across the country, particularly in the education system. As a result, there is a strong bias towards white, privately educated athletes in a large number of sports that receive significant public money under the National Lottery investment scheme. Due to the short-term target of winning medals, funding is primarily spent on boosting Britain's competitive advantage in sports that are particularly dependent on specialised and expensive equipment. Funding these sports and reaffirming the socio-economic advantages of the elite has come at the expense of diversity at an elite level and at the cost of funding for more widely played and accessible sports such as basketball.

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### **\*Access index**

In this report we reference a scale developed in the “Sociodemographic profile of an Olympic team” report. This index is the combined race socio-economic access index (CAI) and was developed, modified from the College Access Index (NY Times, 2017), to describe the racial and socio-economic distribution of each sport and team relative to the general population. The CAI is the average of the Race Access Index and Socio-economic Access Index. A CAI of 1.0 reflects a representative distribution of race and/or secondary education type for each specific sport and a CAI of less than 1.0 indicates a skewed distribution favouring white and/or private secondary education. An arbitrary CAI cut-off of greater than 0.85 was used to define sports and teams with minimal bias favouring white and/or privately educated athletes.