






# The Evolution of Turkish Women Throughout Olympic History: A Journey from Past to Present

## Olimpiyat Tarihinde Türk Kadınının Evrimi: Geçmişten Günümüze Yolculuk

Gizem TARHAN<sup>1</sup> , Mehmet Erman OR<sup>2,3</sup> , Cemile Nihal YURTSEVEN<sup>4</sup> ,  
Selçuk Bora ÇAVUŞOĞLU<sup>5</sup> , Ayşe Nilay KANTAR<sup>6</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Graduate Student, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sport Management Sciences, Türkiye

<sup>2</sup>Prof. Dr., Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sport Management Sciences, Türkiye

<sup>3</sup>Doctorate Student, Istanbul University, Institute of Atatürk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution, Türkiye

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Lecturer, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sport Management Sciences, Türkiye

<sup>5</sup>Prof. Dr., Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Department of Sport Management Sciences, Türkiye

<sup>6</sup>Dr., Istanbul University, Quality Coordinatorship, Türkiye

### ABSTRACT

International Olympics are very important, as countries can express their political power in a more peaceful environment without war through sports competitions. When considering the ancient and modern aspects of the Olympics, mostly males are seen to compete. With growing awareness, significant efforts have been made to ensure women's participation in competitions regarding social justice and equal opportunities for them. This study aims to highlight the role of Turkish women in both ancient and modern Olympics. While women didn't actively compete in ancient Olympic games, they were still involved in sports training. With the revival and adaptation of the ancient Olympics to the modern world, women's participation had failed to be accepted in competitions for a long time in the modern Olympics. However, women managed to enter the Olympics with the federations they established, despite the male-supported ideology they encountered. Meanwhile, Turkish female athletes started participating in the Olympics after 1936 and have maintained their presence with an increasing number of medals. Strengthening and encouraging women in a society is very important in the world of sports, as in every field. Female participation is crucial both politically and socioculturally with regard to Türkiye's international Olympic representation. In conclusion, the increasing success of Turkish women in the Olympics in our study by emphasizing, we consider that women's participation in the Olympics should be further encouraged, despite the difficulties women have faced in ancient and modern Olympics.

### ÖZ

Ülkeler spor yarışmaları ile siyasal güçlerini savaşız ve daha barışçı bir ortamda ifade edebildikleri için uluslararası olimpiyatlar oldukça önemlidir. Olimpiyat oyunlarını antik ve modern olimpiyatlar olarak ele alacak olursak çoğunlukla erkeklerin yarıştığını görmekteyiz. Artan farkındalıkla birlikte, sosyal adalet ve yarışmalarda fırsat eşitliği için kadınların katılımını sağlamaya yönelik önemli çabalar sarf edilmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, antik ve modern olimpiyatlarda kadınların varoluş süreci ile birlikte özellikle Türk kadınının olimpiyatlardaki yerini ve değerini vurgulamaktır. Antik olimpiyat oyunlarında kadının aktif olarak yarışmalar da kadınların spor alanında eğitildikleri tespit edilmiştir. Antik olimpiyatların modern dünyaya uyum sağlayacak şekilde tekrar canlanmasıyla beraber modern olimpiyat oyunlarında da uzun bir süre kadınların yarışlara katılması kabul görmemiştir. Fakat kadınlar karşılaştıkları erkek destekli fikirlere rağmen kurdukları federasyonlar ile olimpiyatlara girmeyi başarmışlardır. Türk kadın sporcular ise 1936 yılından sonra olimpiyatlara katılmaya başlamış ve giderek artan sayıda ve artan madalya başarısıyla varlığını sürdürmektedir. Bir toplumda kadınların daha güçlendirilmesi ve teşvik edilmesi her alanda olduğu gibi spor dünyasında da oldukça önemlidir. Uluslararası olimpiyat oyunlarında Türkiye'nin temsil edilmesinde kadınların yarışmalara katılımlarının sağlanması hem politik hem sosyokültürel açıdan da büyük önem taşımaktadır. "Sonuç olarak, çalışmamızda Türk kadınlarının Olimpiyatlarda artan başarısına vurgu yaparak, kadınların antik ve modern Olimpiyatlarda karşılaştıkları zorluklara rağmen Olimpiyatlara katılımlarının daha da teşvik edilmesi gerektiğini düşünüyoruz."

**Keywords:** Ancient Olympics, Modern Olympics, Turkish Women, Sports, Women

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Antik Olimpiyat, Modern Olimpiyat, Türk Kadını, Spor, Kadın

**Corresponding Author:** Gizem Tarhan E-mail: gizemtarhan@gmail.com

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## Introduction

Sport as a word derives from the Latin *deportere/disportere*, which means to separate and distribute from one another. It was initially referred to as *disport* over time and finally began being used as sport starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of international interactions, sport started being used in Turkish as the word *spor* Filiz, 2002, pp. 203–211). Sport also has many different definitions. However, its most general definition means a cultural phenomenon that provides physical and mental development with or without tools in line with its own rules as something that is done alone or collectively and is educating, entertaining, socializing, and integrative with the community (Kilcigil, 1998). In addition, sports provide the human tendencies of aggression and anger that are present in humanity's creation the opportunity to create a balance both physically and spiritually through sports' peaceful understanding and appropriately competitive environments.

The Olympics are a significant place for countries to express their political power in a war-free and more peaceful environment through sports. From this point of view, the Olympics are best expressed in two groups: the ancient and modern Olympics. The competition of people from different nationalities with each other in the Olympic Games should be based on equal rights for men and women in terms of ensuring social justice and equal opportunities. Athlete is the general name given to people who are active in one or more disciplines of sports at the professional or amateur level. As is understood from this general definition, an athlete is defined without discriminating between male and female. Furthermore, gender equality in sports is a principle that ensures equal rights, opportunities, and treatment between male and female athletes. This principle emphasizes that athletes have the right to play sports and compete in the same conditions regardless of gender. Gender equality applies at all levels of sports from beginners to professionals. However, while gender equality was not so important in the ancient Olympics, gender equality wasn't even clearly emphasized worldwide in the modern Olympics until the 2000s. From antiquity to the modern era, a great evolution has occurred regarding the place of women athletes in the Olympic Games. Empowering and encouraging women are just as crucial in the world of sports as they are in every field. Today, women compete in various sports at the Olympic Games, and the number and achievements of female athletes are steadily increasing. This process represents significant progress in terms of gender equality and the recognition of women's rights in sports. This study aims to emphasize the emergence of the concept of equality in the ancient and modern Olympics, in particular the place and value of Turkish women in the Olympics.

## Ancient Olympics

The Olympics were initially held every four years in antiquity. The Olympic Games that are referred to as the ancient Olympics were organized as a festival dedicated to the god Zeus in Olympia on the Peloponnesian peninsula. The ancient Olympic Games constituted the most basic part of these festivals organized for Zeus for almost 12 centuries. While Olympia, where the festivals were held, was initially a small sanctuary located in a small area, its location became very important during classical antiquity. Women could not compete in the ancient Olympic Games. They were an event organized for men, because at that time many nations such as Greece and others made a sharp distinction between the roles of men and women. In late antiquity Olympia fell out of favor after the Roman Emperor Theodosius I banned the games. After the Middle Ages, the values of classical antiquity started to regain importance with the Renaissance. In this way, as a more modern era began, the Renaissance marked a transition period between both the ancient and modern Olympic Games. Thus, the Olympic Games that had been banned were brought to the agenda and started to be played again thanks to the works of Renaissance intellectuals and their admiration for classical antiquity. The interest in antiquity was so great that various archaeological excavations were even carried out in Olympia where the Olympics had been held. With this interest, reconsidering the ancient Olympics in a way that would adapt to the modern age came to the agenda. Thus, the ancient Olympic Games were reshaped to keep up with the age and reborn as the modern Olympics (Yıldıran, 2014, pp. 555–570; Bohus, 1986).

## Modern Olympics

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an elite group of art reformers in Europe and other parts of the world began to take notice of the Olympic Games (Young, 1987, pp. 271–300). Baron Pierre de Coubertin came up with the idea of revitalizing these games as the modern Olympic Games. With this, the idea of revitalizing the Olympics and the idea of an international Olympiad began to be welcomed. A few days after this idea was made public, the International Olympic Committee decided to meet for its first session and decided that the first modern Olympic Games would be held in Greece, the cradle of the ancient Olympic Games. The first modern Olympic competition was organized in Athens in 1896 with 245 male competitors representing 14 nations. Although Pierre de Coubertin believed that the Olympics should remain traditionally male-dominated, this was broken in 1900 when women began competing in tennis and golf. The second edition of the modern Olympic Games was held in Paris, attracting 1,330 competitors from 22 nations. With the outbreak of World War I, all games were suspended, and as a result of this four-year-long war, millions of people died, mostly men (Pop, 2013, pp. 728–734). Because of World Wars I and II, the Olympic Games of 1916, 1940, and

1944 could not be held. The Olympic Games have over 400 different categories, with over 13,000 athletes having participated and competed in these categories.

After the 1896 Olympic Games, whether the games should be made permanent became a matter of debate. For this reason, the idea was put forward that the games could be separated into summer and winter Olympic Games. The biggest reason for this was the impossibility of organizing snow and ice sports competitions in the summer months. In 1908, the Summer Olympic Games were held in London, the capital of England, at the White City Stadium, the first modern stadium built in a modern style. Meanwhile, the first Winter Olympic Games were held in Chamonix, France in 1924. Today, the Summer and Winter Olympic Games are organized every four years as two separate categories (Pop, 2013, pp. 728–734; Maguire, 2008, pp. 443–458).

## **The Place of Women in the Olympics**

### **Women's Place in Sports in Antiquity**

In ancient times, societies practiced sports activities to improve their warrior skills. In addition, body movements had a very important place in religious rituals and celebrations. As one of the first civilizations, Egypt is seen to have organized many competitions for military, recreational, and religious activities. Examples of competitions included gymnastics, collective and stick games, acrobatic movements, swimming, wrestling, dancing, and knife throwing.

In general, no women competed in the ancient Olympics. However, information does exist showing that women were interested in sports in some civilizations, despite not being able to participate in the ancient Olympics. Only two women participated in the Olympic Games during the Hellenic-Roman period. A detailed examination of women's place in the Olympic Games in ancient times reveals wall paintings known to date back to 2600 BC in Egyptian civilization showing female figures performing acrobatic gymnastic movements and playing ball, both showing the relationship between women and sports and indicating that races were held in the exemplified areas. However, not enough information exists about female participation in the games of that period (Bandy, 2000, pp. 18–22). In Mycenae, the Persian center in the eastern Peloponnese, men living in the 17<sup>th</sup> century BC engaged only in military sports. Therefore, women living in Mycenae were not as fortunate as men in terms of sports activities. Once musical and aesthetic elements began to be emphasized in Mycenae after the 16<sup>th</sup> century BC, important opportunities for women to participate in sports began to emerge (Bohus, 1986). Also, the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece were an event for men. Women could not participate in or watch sporting events at that time. However, even if women did not compete in the Olympic Games, the Hera Games were organized for women every four years in the name of Zeus' wife, Hera, as a separate competition for women. In these festivals, known as the Heraean Games, women could participate in sporting events, which included various events such as running races. Another place where women competed in antiquity was in the religious ceremonies in Sparta and Cyrene. The reason why women could not participate in the Olympic games like men was that Greek society at the time made a clear distinction between the roles of men and women. Through cultural and social conventions, women were usually assigned to take care of the home and the family. Sporting events and the Olympics were organized for competition and honor among men. The restriction of these events to men reflected ancient Greek society's idea of discrimination based on gender roles. Thus, women could not participate in the ancient Olympic Games and often held their own sporting events in separate festivals. In addition, unlike women living in Greek cities, Spartan women were subjected to physical training. The purpose of this training for Spartan women was not only for competitions but also for giving birth to healthy and strong children (Bandy, 2000, pp. 18–22; Mechikoff & Estes, 1993; Pfister, 2000, pp. 38–45). The scope of these training activities included active sports activities such as dancing, jumping, ball games, javelin, wrestling, discus throwing, and running. Women in Roman civilization were economically and socially freer than women in Ancient Greece. The influence of Roman rule in Ancient Greece began to show itself in the Olympic Games in the Helleno-Roman period after 200 BC. During this period, two women's names were especially prominent in Olympia: Theodota, a female competitor, won the chariot race in 84 BC, and Kasia won the horse race in 153 AD. In addition, female gladiators also existed in Rome during the reign of Nero (Bandy, 2000, pp. 18–22; Spears, 1984, pp. 32–47; Lyberg, 2000, pp. 46–53).

### **Women's Place in Sports from Middle Ages to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

With the spread of Christianity across Europe in Late Antiquity, developments in the field of physical education became less important. However, physical education came to the fore again during the period of feudalism, which began in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD and lasted until the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the importance of the office of knighthood increased. Physical education had emerged as a subject only for men. On the other hand, although women from the noble class did not take physical education classes, the training they received was generally aimed at making their husbands' lives easier and maintaining them. In addition, the sports practiced by the peasant and noble classes during the Middle Ages were quite different from one another. However, with the adoption of the concepts of humanism, humanitarianism, and human focus, many sports began to be practiced by the nobility. With this, women started to participate in archery, chess, rowing, horse riding, ice skating, hunting, and other activities. In addition, the fact that Elizabeth I of England (1533-1603) loved hunting despite being queen encouraged other noble-class women of Elizabethan times to participate in sports activities such as tennis, fencing, archery, and hunting. In Germany, gymnastics for women started

to develop in 1830. The reason why gymnastics came to the forefront was that it was a sport that could attract women's attention and was an exercise that wasn't tiring or dangerous. During late antiquity, however, women's participation in sporting events was very limited and they unlikely would have participated in major international events such as the ancient Olympic Games (Bandy, 2000, pp. 18–22; Butts, 1955; Memiş & Yıldırım, 2011, pp. 17–26).

### **Women's Place in Sports in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the field of sports began being institutionalized, women had the tendency to participate more in the field of physical education. In 1885, Miss Bergman founded the Training College for Women Teachers of Physical Education in England. After the US Civil War, black women there decided to merge the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women, establishing the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs in 1896. In addition, organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association made efforts to encourage women to participate in sports and physical education. By 1899, women physical educators aimed to establish a Basketball Committee. In this way, they ensured that the rules of women's basketball were standardized for everyone. In 1905, this committee joined the American Physical Education Association (Memiş & Yıldırım, 2011, pp. 17–26; Captain, 1991, pp. 81–102; Bouchier, 1998, pp. 65–86).

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the decision was made to introduce sports classes such as gymnastics and jumping rope for men and women. This practice was implemented in physical education programs and brought about regulations on health, posture, and beauty for women. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century America, Dio Lewis and Catherine Beecher became leaders who defended women's rights and tried to explain the importance of sports for women. However, interest in gymnastics began to decline in 20<sup>th</sup>-century America. Gymnastics was replaced by dance and athleticism, with dance being popular in colleges and having begun to be included in every program. The reason for the decrease in interest in gymnastics and the increase in interest in dance was that gymnastics were more suitable for men, with women preferring dance because of the difficulty they had performing the movements in gymnastics (Mechikoff & Estes, 1993; Pfister, 2000, pp. 38–45).

### **Women's Place in Sports Since the Modern Olympics**

The modern Olympic Games is a global sporting event with global reach, attracting people of all races, ages, and social backgrounds around the world. Looking at the history of the modern Olympic Games, Baron de Coubertin initiated the first modern Olympic Games in 1896 and considered them to only be for men. He thought that women would have difficulty competing in the games because women were more sensitive and emotional. Because of this idea, Coubertin's exclusion of women from the games was unwelcome. The reason why Coubertin advocated that women should not be included in sports branches was not only because he had grown up in an aristocratic family but also because of the idea of Muscular Christianity that he adopted during his studies in England. He also thought that, if women practiced the same sports as men under the concept of equality, male authority in the family and society would be shaken and social collapse would occur. Despite Coubertin's views, women participated in the 1900 Olympics in Paris in two sports, tennis, and golf. The Britain Charlotte Cooper won first place in tennis and the American Margaret Abott won first place in golf. Although a total of 19 women athletes from five nations participated in these Olympics, female participation didn't even make up 1% of the total number of athletes (Emery, 1984, pp. 62–63; Holt, 1991, pp. 121–134; Lopiano, 2000, pp. 54–58; Lyberg, 2000, pp. 46–53).

In 1912, women could compete in swimming through three events: the 4x100m freestyle relay, the 100m freestyle, and the tower jump. However, while female participation in swimming competitions was accepted in these three disciplines, the International Amateur Athletic Federation did not accept female participation in athletics in any way. In the face of this situation, women had to take steps to establish their own sports federations in France (Emery, 1984, pp. 62–63). The leader of the women's struggle to be a part of the Olympics was the French Alice Milliat, who founded the French Federation of Women's Clubs in 1917 and became its president in 1919 (Kidane, 2000, p. 16). Although the participation of women in athletics competitions in the Olympic Games to be held in Antwerp was rejected by Coubertin and many executives in 1919, the first Women's Olympiad was organized in Monaco in 1921. A total of five countries, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Italy, and Norway, participated in the Women's Olympiad. In the same year, the International Women's Sports Federation was founded on October 31 in Paris with the support of France, America, England, Italy, and Czechoslovakia. In 1922, the Second Women's Olympiad was organized again in Monaco with around 300 participants. In Paris, the International Women's Sports Federation (UKSF) organized the first Women's World Games on April 20, 1922 (Memiş & Yıldırım, 2011, pp. 17–26; Quintillan, 2000, pp. 27–28). In 1926, a very important development took place in the field of athletics. Finally, thanks to an agreement between the UKSF and the International Athletics Federation, women's activities in this branch began to be brought under the supervision of athletics. Women were legally allowed to participate in the Olympics in athletics in 1928. Thus, in the 9<sup>th</sup> Olympics held in Amsterdam in 1928, women's athletics competitions 100m, 800m, 4x100m hurdles, high jump, discus throw were included in the games. Quite remarkably, women had participated in the Olympics in the field of athletics about a year after the retirement of Coubertin, who was known for his views on women not participating in the Olympics. Meanwhile, Alice Milliat continued to organize the World Women's Games because she thought

that female participation in Olympic competitions was insufficient, with only two more games where women could compete having been organized in Prague in 1930 and in London in 1934 with the participation of 16 countries (Pfister, 2000, pp. 38–45; Memiş & Yıldiran, 2011, pp. 17–26; Quintillan, 2000, pp. 27–28; Johnson & Frite, 1984, p. 61).

As a result of the pressure exerted by the UKSF in the Fifth World Games due to the low number of branches in which women competed in the Olympic Games, more branches for women were included in the Olympic Games. As a result, women were able to compete in almost all branches of athletics in the Olympics held in 1936. Despite these developments, the UKSF was closed in 1938. As the pioneer of the 20th century in the advancement of women in sports, Alice Milliat had made history (Memiş & Yıldiran, 2011, pp. 17–26; Quintillan, 2000, pp. 27–28).

### Türkiye and the Olympics

Türkiye has been participating in the Olympic Games since 1906 with the exception of the 1920 and 1982 Olympic Games. Turkish female athletes have been participating in the Olympics since 1936, with Suat Fetgeri Aşeni and Halet Çambel participating in the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics. This symbolizes the participation of Türkiye's first female Olympic athletes and also shows the presence of Turkish women on the international sports scene. The results from Koca's (2018) study concluded an increase in the number of female athletes participating in the Olympics to have occurred since 1984. Turkish female athletes showed particular involvement in the 2012 Olympic Games where 112 Turkish athletes participated, of whom 42% were men and 58% women, making it the Olympic Games with the highest participation of Turkish women in history. The successful Olympic qualification of the Women's National Volleyball and Basketball Teams played a major role in the higher participation of Turkish women. When examining the gender distributions of licensed athletes affiliated with federations in 2017, the sports branches where female athletes are seen to be much more active are ice skating (71% women and 29% men), volleyball (70% women and 30% men), gymnastics (68% women and 32% men), folk dances (58% women and 42% men), and equestrianism (58% women and 42% men). On the other hand, the sports branches in which women are less active are automotive sports (9.21%), wrestling (6%), billiards (5%), and motorcycling (4%). In 2020, 58 male and 50 female athletes from Türkiye participated in the Tokyo Olympic Games. Turkish female athletes made history by winning 5 out of 13 medals in the athletics branch at the 2020 Olympic Games (Koca, 2018; Koca & Bulgu, 2005, pp. 163–184; Çelik & İnce Yenilmez, 2019, pp. 9–17).

Because men are more often involved in sports in Türkiye, women required some time to create a space for themselves. According to Turkish society's point of view on women, women are generally defined as a wife who leads a passive life as a mother or a wife who performs her duties related to the home (*Yeni Asır*, 2018).

### Successful Turkish Female Athletes Since the Olympics

**1. Halet Çambel and Suat Fetgeri Aşeni.** They were the first Turkish women athletes to participate in the Olympics and thus have special importance for Türkiye. Participating in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, the duo represented Türkiye in fencing (*TRT Spor*, 2021).

**2. Hülya Şenyurt.** She participated in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, winning the bronze medal in judo's 48 kg category. She had previously won the European Youth Championship in 1991 and made history in 1990 winning second place in Europe. Through the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, she also became the first Turkish female athlete to win a medal in the Olympics (*Anadolu Agency [AA]*, 2019; *Turkish Olympic Committee [TOC]*, 2023).

**3. Hamide Bıçkın.** She participated in the 2000 Sydney Olympics and won the bronze medal in taekwondo (*Turkish Olympic Committee [TOC]*, 2023).

**4. Nurcan Taylan.** In the 2004 Athens Olympics, she broke Olympic and world records in weightlifting for the 48 kg class to become the champion. She made her name in Turkish sports history as the first Turkish female athlete to win a gold medal. In addition, she added to her successful achievements by winning 3 gold medals in shrug, snatch, and overall in the 2009 European Weightlifting Championships organized in Romania. In 2010, she broke the world record by lifting 121 kilograms at the 2010 World Weightlifting Championships. She has won gold medals and represented Türkiye everywhere (*Wikipedia*, n.d.; *İstanbul İşletme Enstitüsü [IENSTITU]*, 2021).

**5. Reyhan Arabacıoğlu.** She participated in the 2004 Athens Olympics and won the bronze medal in weightlifting (*Turkish Olympic Committee [TOC]*, 2023).

**6. Azize Tanrıku.** She participated in the 2008 Beijing Olympics and won the silver medal in the individual taekwondo event (*Spor Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü [SHGM]*, 2012).

**7. Nur Tatar Askari.** She won two different medals in two Olympic Games. National taekwondo player Nur Tatar Askari is the only Turkish female athlete to win medals in two consecutive Olympics. She won the silver medal in women's taekwondo at

the 2012 London Olympics and the bronze medal in taekwondo in the 2016 Rio Olympics (*Anadolu Agency [AA]*, 2019; *Spor Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü [SHGM]*, 2012).

**8. Busenaz Sürmeneli.** In the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, she won the gold medal in boxing. She has written her name in history as a World and Olympic champion and as the first Turkish female athlete to win a gold medal in boxing from Türkiye. In 2023, she was significantly successful in women's boxing in the European Games organized in Poland. She entered the ring in the women's 66 kg category and won the gold medal (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**9. Buse Naz Çakıroğlu.** In the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, she won the silver medal in boxing. She was the first athlete from Türkiye to win an Olympic medal in boxing and is also the world runner-up and a European champion. Thus, she changed the gender perspective. She is a Turkish female athlete who has proven that women can compete and succeed in any branch (*Euronews*, 2023).

**10. Hatice Kübra İlgün.** She won a bronze medal in taekwondo in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

**11. Yasemin Adar.** She won the bronze medal in wrestling in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. She is the first female athlete from Türkiye to win an Olympic medal in this discipline. She also won the European championship three times in a row, as well as being the first to win a gold medal in women's wrestling in Türkiye. This is why she's also known as the "Wrestler of Firsts". While male hegemony had been present in wrestling, she has broken this perspective (*Anadolu Agency [AA]*, 2019).

**12. Merve Çoban.** She won a bronze medal in karate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics (*Turkish Olympic Committee [TOC]*, 2023; *İstanbul İşletme Enstitüsü [IENSTITU]*, 2021).

### **Turkish Female Athletes' Achievements in the 2023**

Many Turkish female athletes have left their mark in 2023 through their achievements, making Türkiye proud. These successful Turkish female athletes include:

**1. Aysu Türkoğlu.** She is the first Turkish female athlete to have swum across the North Channel in under 16 hours (*TRT Haber*, 2023).

**2. Naz Arıcı.** She started ice skating at the age of 29. With her determination and hard work, this 5-time world champion has shown that age does not matter in sports and has broken down the prejudices of society. In 2023, Naz Arıcı won the gold medal in the International Adult Figure Skating Championships (*TRT Haber*, 2023).

**3. Dilek Koçak.** She was discovered while grazing animals in her village life and has shown herself to be talented and successful in athletics. She is the European Champion in athletics, winning the gold medal in the 1500-meter race in the Under-20 European Athletics in 2023 and then came 3rd in the 800 meters and crowned it with a bronze medal. She continues to prepare for the Paris 2024 Olympics (*TRT Haber*, 2023; *Anadolu Agency [AA]*, 2023).

**4. Başak Mireli.** She is the first Turkish woman to sail across the Atlantic solo (*TRT Haber*, 2023).

**5. Turkish Women's National Volleyball Team:** 2023 year marks the golden era of Turkish women's volleyball. The Turkish Women's National Volleyball Team achieved success in the League of Nations, became European Champions, and won the World Cup. The Turkish National Women's Volleyball Team has been running from success to success like a dream and will participate in the Paris 2024 Olympics (*Hürriyet Spor Arena*, 2023).

**6. Fenerbahçe Women's Basketball Team:** The Turkish team has achieved great success in basketball, reaching the finals in EuroLeague Women for the 5th time (*Fenerbahçe Spor Kulübü*, 2023). In FIBA's SuperCup Women 2023, the Fenerbahçe Women's Basketball Team became the first team to bring the trophy to Türkiye with their success (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**7. Buse Tosun Çavuşoğlu.** Türkiye has produced another new champion after Yasemin Adar in the World Championships, with the Turkish female wrestler, Buse Tosun, having qualified for the Paris 2024 Olympics (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**8. Evin Demirhan Yavuz.** She won the women's 50 kg wrestling category, ranking in the top five. Evin Demirhan Yavuz is the second Turkish female wrestler to qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**9. Busenaz Sürmeneli.** She won the gold medal in the women's 66 kg in boxing category, defeating Derieuw in the final round (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**10. Buse Naz Çakıroğlu.** She defeated Wassila Lkhadiri in the final round to win the gold medal in the Women's 50 kg boxing category (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**11. Sümeyye Boyacı.** She won the bronze medal at the Para Swimming World Championships swimming the 50-meter backstroke. National athlete Sümeyye Boyacı has also qualified for the Paris 2024 Olympics (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**12. Tuğba Danışmaz.** She won the gold medal in the European Indoor Athletics Championships, breaking a record in the finals. Tuğba Danışmaz succeeded in the women's triple jump final to win Türkiye's first and only medal in this competition (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**13. Galatasaray Women's Volleyball Team:** Galatasaray Women's Volleyball Team won the championship at the 2023 Balkan Cup (*Milliyet*, 2023).

**14. Şahika Ercümen.** She became the first Turkish athlete, male or female, to do 100-meter freediving with a fixed weight (*Milliyet*, 2023).

In short, although women's participation in the Olympic Games in Türkiye and around the world is considered a positive step toward gender equality, more opportunities clearly should be offered to female athletes as part of an effort to achieve social equality. However, more needs to be done to ensure that female athletes have access to the same opportunities and support as their male athletes in terms of financial support, media attention, and equal competitive conditions.

## Conclusion

As a result, in spite of gender inequality and male-dominated games in the ancient Olympic Games, the examined sources show that women had started to receive education on physical education, albeit in small numbers. Still, women had not yet been given that much priority in the ancient Olympic Games. With the passage of time and women's desire to show themselves progress in the field of sports, however, women have started to make a place for themselves in the modern Olympic Games thanks to the federations they've established and their insistence. Since achieving their highest participation in the Olympics in 2012, Turkish women have continued to make a name for themselves with the medals they won in the 2020 Olympics. Encouraging Turkish women to represent Türkiye in the field of sports, especially in the international Olympic Games, and ensuring their participation in competitions are very important, both politically and socioculturally. As a result, this study would like to draw attention to the difficulties faced by women in the ancient and modern Olympic Games, as well as the stages through which they fought for their presence in the Olympic Games, and to emphasize the place of Turkish women and their increasing success in the modern Olympic Games.

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