

## Debate: Inequality in Professional Women's Sports

As we've seen in this unit, there has been a lot of progress made over the late 20th-21st century by women in the field of sports. With that said, there are still ways in which female athletes are struggling for what they feel is equal rights and treatment within their sports and broader society.

**Your assignment:** Continuing in our discussion of women in sports, you are going to make a case for or against one of the current gender discrimination cases pending in sports. We will debate 2 current cases (you will be assigned to debate one of them.)

### **Grading (30 pts. total):**

- Written preparation for your debate (your notes & written questions ahead of the debate): 10 points
- Verbal participation in your debate: 20 points

## The Teams/Issues

WNBA vs NBA management (parent league)  
WTA vs USTA (US Tennis Association)  
LPGA vs PGA/men's tournaments

**Notes:** Each person will receive a 10 pts notes grade. If you choose to take notes as a group on a shared doc, please make sure to label who contributed what or color code the notes by person.

Your personal contribution to your group's notes should be clear and:

- Reflect the 2+ sources you looked at,
- Include specific evidence like quotes, statistics, details on the issue, etc. (not just ideas!),
- Be at least 1/2-3/4 of a page typed in length,
- Include a link for each of the sources represented in the notes

**Questions:** Your team should compile a list of 3-5 questions you would like your debate to center on. Those questions will be shared with your opposing teammates to help them prepare for the debate.

### **Things to consider in your research:**

- Explore salary, training facilities, travel, medical, etc.
- What is the age of the leagues/organizations in question?
- What are the share of revenues earned by players?
- What options are available to players to supplement their income? (sponsorships, non-league games, appearance fees, etc.)
- What are the leagues/organizations investing in media, advertising, acquiring sponsors?
- How easy is it for fans to access viewing or attend a game/match?
- What do athletes have to say about their work/playing conditions?

### **Some sources to get you started:**

<https://online.adelphi.edu/articles/male-female-sports-salary/>

## **Basketball**

In basketball, the pay gap between the NBA first pick and the WNBA first pick is huge. DeAndre Ayton will earn \$5,091,500 next season in comparison to A'ja Wilson, who will earn a little over \$50,000. This disparity means that a player who led her team to the championship last year and to the championship game this year will make 100% less than a male player.

For the 2018 season, WNBA players will make, on average, somewhere around \$79,000 with veterans who have been in the league for at least six years and are eligible for a maximum salary of \$115,500. In contrast, the average starting salary of NBA players is upwards of \$500,000 with two of its best players—Steph Curry and LeBron James—both earning well over \$32 million a year or roughly \$2.6 million a month. In short, even the "worst" players in the NBA earn considerably more than the WNBA's best.

Source: <https://witi.com/articles/1324/Examining-the-Gender-Pay-Gap-in-Elite-Sports/>

Pay disparity between WNBA and NBA:

<https://www.deseret.com/sports/2021/4/7/22367915/pay-disparity-between-nba-wnba-is-a-numbers-game>

Russian basketball pays better!

<https://www.sbnation.com/nba/2015/2/3/7973177/diana-taurasi-sit-out-wnba-season-russian-salary>

## **Tennis**

John McEnroe ranks Serena 700 against men: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDPK8ds1D-o>

Tennis equality (WTA v ATP): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGHjIL-sYTM>

Serena on inequality: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYXhS1F9zG0&t=1s>

Tennis has been hailed as a leader in gender equality among major sports, and the numbers seem to show that—at least when it comes to the four Grand Slam tournaments and a handful of high-profile events. There is no pay gap in these competitions. The female players get the same prize money as their male counterparts. Both Rafael Nadal and Sloane Stephens, for instance, received \$3.7 million for winning last year's U.S. Open while Roger Federer and Serena Williams both took home \$4 million as Australian Open champions.

Gender equality, right?

Well, not exactly. Dig a little deeper, and the truth emerges. The *New York Times* reports female tennis players earn 80 cents for each dollar earned by male players, and this discrepancy "matches the general pay gap in American workplaces." This gap translates to a difference of roughly \$120,624 in total earnings.

This difference means the 15th ranked male player in the world, on average, makes \$120,624 more compared to a female player with the same ranking. There is still a disparity. Thankfully for female tennis players, the discrepancy is not as glaring as in the case of the WNBA and the NBA, or United States (and global) soccer.

Source: <https://witi.com/articles/1324/Examining-the-Gender-Pay-Gap-in-Elite-Sports/>

How do Tennis players get paid? <https://mytennishq.com/6-ways-how-tennis-players-get-paid-and-how-much/>

How much do Tennis players make? <https://mytennishq.com/how-much-do-tennis-players-make-the-ugly-truth/>

Breaking down ITF's new gender equality research (going beyond pay):

<https://www.itftennis.com/en/news-and-media/articles/itf-unveils-new-research-into-gender-equality-in-sport/> and some

framing of this report: <https://www.si.com/tennis/2021/04/14/mailbag-breaking-down-itf-gender-equality-research>

Vogue digs into the issue: <https://www.vogue.com/article/womens-tennis-gender-equality>

## **Golf**

Golf is one of the world's most lucrative sports, with top participants in the men's and women's games amongst the highest paid sportspeople on the planet.

Yet, it remains one of the few sports where there's a prize money pay gap between the genders at elite level.

The BBC's recent Prize Money in Sport study showed that golf is one of only three of the 48 sports included (football and basketball being the others) where at least one major competition does not offer equal prize money for men and women.

A key issue for golf with regard the gender pay gap is the extent to which the men's and women's games are separated by the logistics of the sport.

It's simply not possible to host the biggest events in the men's and women's game at the same place at the same time, as per Wimbledon, or the Diamond League Athletics for example.

Source: <https://www.golfmonthly.com/news/tour-news/golfs-gender-pay-gap-one-of-the-biggest-in-sport-222592>

ESPN on the pay gap:

[https://www.espn.com/espnw/sports/story/\\_/id/15160220/big-gap-earnings-men-women-professional-golfers](https://www.espn.com/espnw/sports/story/_/id/15160220/big-gap-earnings-men-women-professional-golfers)

LPGA survey: <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/lpga-confidential-survey-players-speak-inequality/story?id=48558528>

Opinion piece: <https://www.golfchannel.com/news/randalls-rant-time-step-and-fill-gender-pay-gap>

Social media & golf: <https://www.golfdigest.com/story/women-social-media>

Male v. female golfers: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/jun/06/male-female-athlete-comparison-golf>

Inequality in golf:

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/golf/mel-reid-interview-lpga-tour-european-tour-inequality-sexism-georgia-hall-a8761161.html>

Australian golf bridges gender gap:

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/05/golf/oates-vic-open-equal-pay-minjee-lee-simon-hawkes/index.html>

Proposal to consider gender blind tournaments:

<https://bleacherreport.com/articles/335849-why-not-gender-blind-golf-tournaments>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bwqfqhIII.A>