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Olympics 2024: Paris promised gender equality. Are TV commentators meeting that goal?

Theme:
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 Olympics 2024: Paris promised gender equality. Are TV commentators meeting that goal?

Co-authored by Serena Solomon - Radio NZ

Paris made some big promises ahead of these Olympics. Triathletes would swim in the notoriously polluted urban section of the Seine river and these games would be gender equal. That means near-equal numbers of female and male athletes, and portraying them equally in sports commentary.

Delivering on those benchmarks was iffy at the start. The men's triathlon was [postponed](#) due to unsafe water. On day three, veteran British broadcaster Bob Ballard was [sent packing](#) after joking that medal-winning female swimmers were prolonging their celebration because they were "doing their makeup".

But all seems to be clearing up. Athletes swam in the Seine. Despite a few "girl" and "lady" bombs - a dismissive way to reference some of the strongest fastest people in the world - TV presenters have so far made huge improvements, according to sociologist Professor Toni Bruce from the University of Auckland, who is analysing how female athletes are portrayed at the Olympics and Paralympics.

"What we're starting to see is this real focus - particularly by the Olympics - on making sure that we don't accidentally fall into older patterns of talking about or taking photographs of or representing men and women differently," she said, "while also recognising that women's sport is different from men's sport."

How does one commentate sports equally?

Broadcasters need to steer away from words or subjects that reinforce gender stereotypes, and use language that is similar for male and female competitors, said Bruce, who is a former journalist.

Forget girls, women and chicks. Commentators should be using "females" or "women" to match the usual reference to "men" and "males," according to the International Olympic Committees [Portrayal Guidelines](#) given out to the media. The guidelines were first published in 2018 and updated for Paris.

The guideline advises dropping warlike, masculine references such as "she swam 'like a man/beast,' to win the race" and instead using something like "she swam with determination to win that race".

Drop a description like "catfight" for a competitive women's event and use an "exciting contest".

"Ah, the chicks are crying." Nope. "Lots of emotions for these medalists." Yep.

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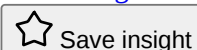


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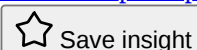


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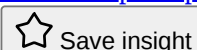


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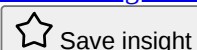


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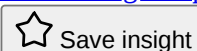


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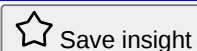


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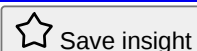
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
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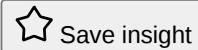
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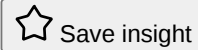
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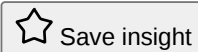
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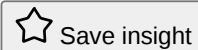
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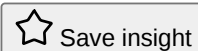
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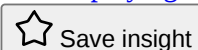
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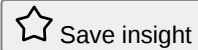
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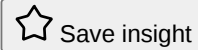
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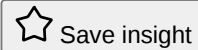


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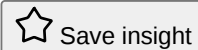


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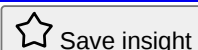
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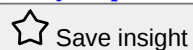
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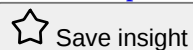
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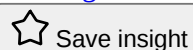
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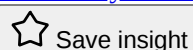
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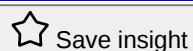
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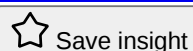
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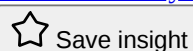
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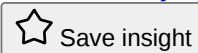
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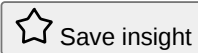
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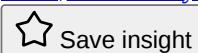
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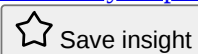
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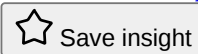


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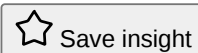
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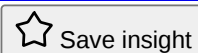
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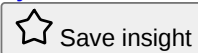
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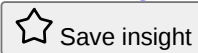
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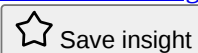
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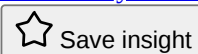
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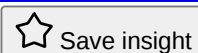
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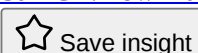
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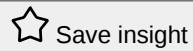
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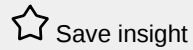
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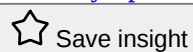
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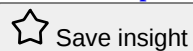
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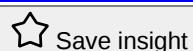
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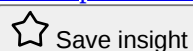
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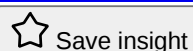
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
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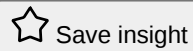
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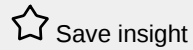
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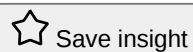
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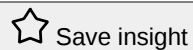
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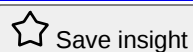
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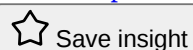
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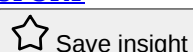
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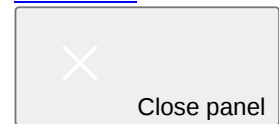
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