

# Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Elite Athletics

*Where did it all start and where are we now?*

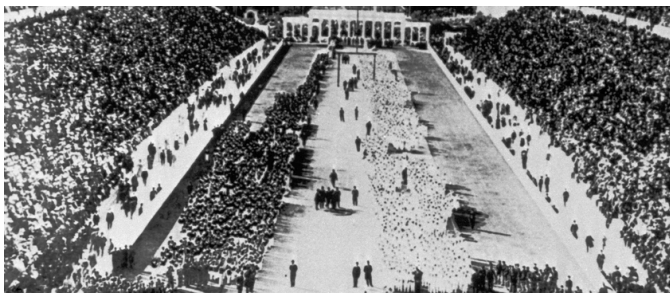


Photo: <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/athens-1896>

**1896**

## The first Summer Olympic Games

- First international Olympic Games held in modern history
- Only men were permitted to compete
- Athletics: 12 men's events

**1900**

## Women compete in the Summer Olympic Games for the first time

- Athlete participation: 22 women, 975 men
- Women were not yet permitted to compete in athletics
- Athletics: 23 men's events



Photo: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1900\\_Summer\\_Olympics#/media/File:Charlotte\\_Cooper.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1900_Summer_Olympics#/media/File:Charlotte_Cooper.jpg)

**1928**

## Women's athletics introduced into the Olympic program

- Athletics: 22 men's events, 5 women's events
- Continuous concerns arose around the risks of women's participation (e.g., strenuous physical activity could damage reproductive organs... or cause a woman's uterus to "fall out")



After the 1928 Games, the **800m** was deemed **"too dangerous"** for women 

1932

### Black female athletes face additional challenges due to racial discrimination

- Despite advancements in women's sports, Black female athletes continued to face many barriers in sport
- e.g., U.S. athletes Louise Stokes and Tidy Pickett qualified for the 1932 Olympic Games in athletics, but they were excluded from participating due to their race



Photo: <https://olympics.com/en/news/in-amsterdam-in-1928-lina-radke-was-the-first-female-olympic-800m-champion-but>

1960

### Women's 800m reinstated

- 32 years later, the women's 800m was added back into the Olympic program
- Athletics: 24 men's events, 10 women's events

1972

### Official women's race established for the Boston Marathon

- The Amateur Athletics Union permitted marathons to now allow official entries for women



Photo: <https://www.boston.com/sports/boston-marathon/2016/04/15/sara-mae-berman/>



Photo: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletics\\_at\\_the\\_1984\\_Summer\\_Olympics\\_%E2%80%93\\_Women%27s\\_3000\\_metres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athletics_at_the_1984_Summer_Olympics_%E2%80%93_Women%27s_3000_metres)

1984

### Women's Marathon, 3000m, and 400m Hurdles introduced into the Olympic program

- Athletics: 24 men's events, 17 women's events



2008

### Women's 3000m steeplechase introduced into the Olympic program

- Athletics: 24 men's events, 23 women's events



Photo: <https://www.denverpost.com/2008/08/15/american-captures-bronze-in-womens-10000-meters-cus-barringer-qualifies-for-steeplechase-final/>



2014

### Montaño races 800m while 8 months pregnant

- Alysa Montaño ran the 800m at the USA Track & Field Championships while ~ 8 months pregnant



2015

### Stellingwerff appeals Athletics Canada's policy

- Hilary Stellingwerff contended that AC's policy that equates pregnancy with injury is discriminatory



2016

### Athletics Canada updates policy

- Following Stellingwerff's appeal, AC replaced the term "injury card" with "health card"
- A health card due to pregnancy can now be used more than once

2018

## Ultra and major marathons begin to offer pregnancy deferrals

- The Western States Endurance Run introduced a new policy so runners can defer a qualification for up to 3 years due to pregnancy
- Others have since begun to follow suit (e.g., London Marathon in 2021)



## The New York Times

Opinion

### Nike Told Me to Dream Crazy, Until I Wanted a Baby

Being a mother and a champion was a crazy dream. It didn't have to be.

By Alysia Montaño Video by Max Cantor and Written and Produced by Lindsay Crouse Alysia Montaño is an Olympic runner and three-time U.S. Olympian.

May 12, 2019

OPINION

### Allyson Felix: My Own Nike Pregnancy Story

I've been one of Nike's most widely marketed athletes. If I can't secure maternity protections, who can?

May 22, 2019



OLYMPICS

## Under fire, Nike expands protections for pregnant athletes

By Adam Kilgore

### Nike to change its pregnancy policy in future athlete contracts amid backlash

BY SOPHIE LEWIS MAY 18, 2019 12:09 PM / CBS NEWS



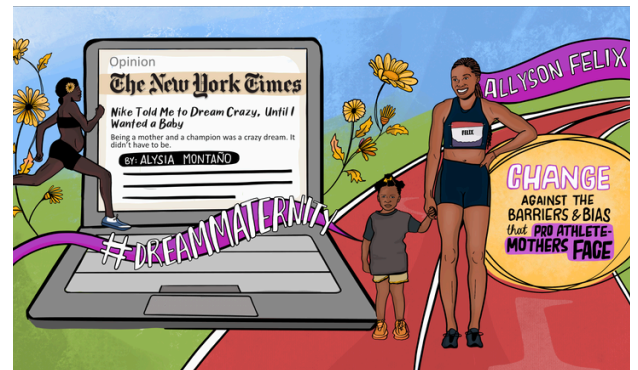
## Nike further expands protections for pregnant athletes after fierce backlash

By Jordan Valinsky, CNN Business Updated 11:37 AM EDT, Mon August 19, 2019

2019 May

## New York Times articles elicit public outcry

- Alysia Montaño and Allyson Felix spoke out publicly about sponsors' lack of maternity support
- Initiated the #DreamMaternity movement



2019 August

## Nike responds to pushback and announces new maternity policy

- In response to NYT op-eds, Nike introduced a new maternity policy for all sponsored athletes to guarantee an athlete's pay for 18 months around pregnancy
- Other athletic apparel companies have since followed suit

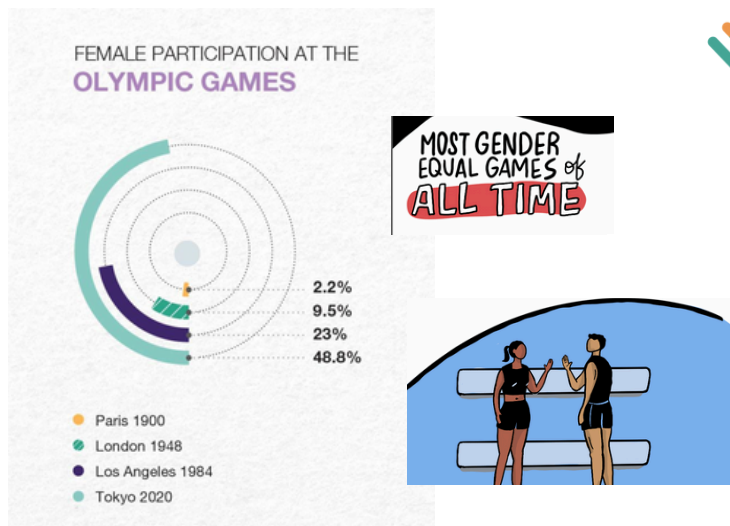
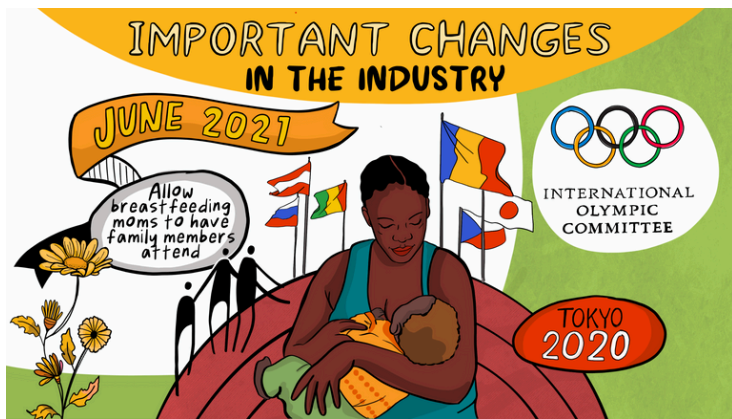


“Dedicated to breaking barriers that limit a woman’s choice to pursue and thrive in both career and motherhood.”

2020

## &Mother founded by Montañó

- Alysia Montañó is the Founder, President & CEO of &Mother, a non-profit organization designed to actively support female athletes through pregnancy & motherhood
- Allyson Felix also sits on the Board of Directors for &Mother



Graph: <https://olympvis-jupyterbook.hongtaoh.com/03-lit/01-lit-female.html>

# &mother



OISELLE - a brand that was made BY and FOR women athletes - is an official founding sponsor of &Mother!



## 2021 February

### USA Track & Field introduces maternity grant fund

- USATF introduced a new grant to assist elite female runners during pregnancy / postpartum

## 2021 June

TOKYO 2020



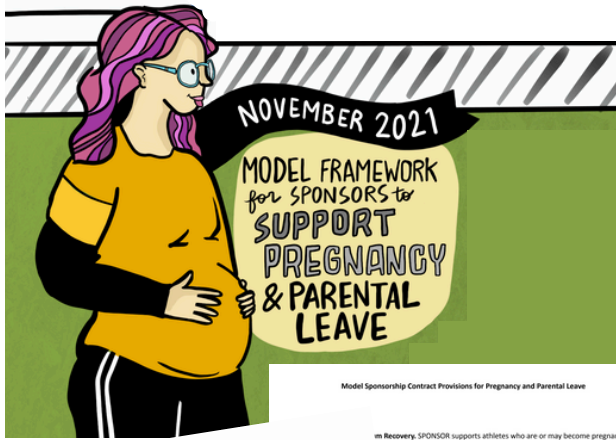
### International Olympic Committee responds to backlash from breastfeeding mothers

- After significant pushback from female athletes, the IOC enacted a new policy for breastfeeding athlete-moms: Family members were then permitted to attend the Tokyo 2020ne Olympic Games amid the COVID-19 pandemic

## 2021 July - August

### Summer Olympic Games participation rates almost reach gender parity

- The IOC deemed the Tokyo Olympics the most gender equal Games off all time
- Women comprised a record-breaking 49% of athlete participants



Model Sponsorship Contract Provisions for Pregnancy and Parental Leave  
 Overview for Sponsors

**Recovery:** SPONSOR supports athletes who are or may become pregnant, if they elect whether to continue to provide Services pursuant to this contract, or to reduce ATHLETE's compensation because of ATHLETE's pregnancy, and related medical conditions, including up to twelve months of medical care, regardless of ATHLETE's ability to train or compete. ATHLETE agrees to the extent ATHLETE is able to do so safely and comfortably, except as noted in the next paragraph, SPONSOR will make reasonable efforts to ensure pregnancy and postpartum needs to enable ATHLETE to provide Services.

**Parental Leave:** During parental leave, ATHLETE will not be required to provide any Services pursuant to this contract and ATHLETE's obligations under this contract to compete will be waived. If pregnant, ATHLETE may take parental leave during the period of time that begins four weeks before ATHLETE's due date and ends twelve weeks after ATHLETE gives birth. If ATHLETE becomes a parent during the term of this contract as the result of ATHLETE's spouse or partner or surrogate giving birth or adoption or placement of a child under five years of age, ATHLETE may take twelve weeks of parental leave at any point within one year of the arrival of ATHLETE's child. SPONSOR will not terminate this contract or reduce ATHLETE's compensation because of ATHLETE's parental leave.

As necessary:

**Performance clause:** Add "Except as set forth in paragraphs \_\_\_, herein [reference to pregnancy and parental leave clauses]."

**Compensation clause:** Add "Except as set forth in paragraphs \_\_\_, herein [reference to pregnancy and parental leave clauses]."

**Termination clause:** Add "Except as set forth in paragraphs \_\_\_, herein [reference to pregnancy and parental leave clauses]."

## 2021 November

&Mother releases framework for sponsors to better support pregnancy and parental leave

- A model framework developed in partnership with *Oiselle*
- Sponsorship Contract Provisions for Pregnancy and Parental Leave
- Best Practices for Supporting and Accommodating Pregnant and Parenting Athletes



Graphic: <https://saysh.com/en-ca/pages/maternityreturns>

## 2022 April

Saysh introduces the "Maternity Returns Policy"

- Founded by Allyson Felix, the women's running sneakers brand *Saysh* announced a new policy that allowed women to receive a free new pair of Saysh sneakers if their foot size changed due to pregnancy



## 2022 June

&Mother initiates on-site childcare at USATF Championships

- For the first time ever, childcare services were offered on-site at the USATF Championships for athletes, coaches, and staff
- This initiative was led by Allyson Felix and *Athleta* partnered with &Mother

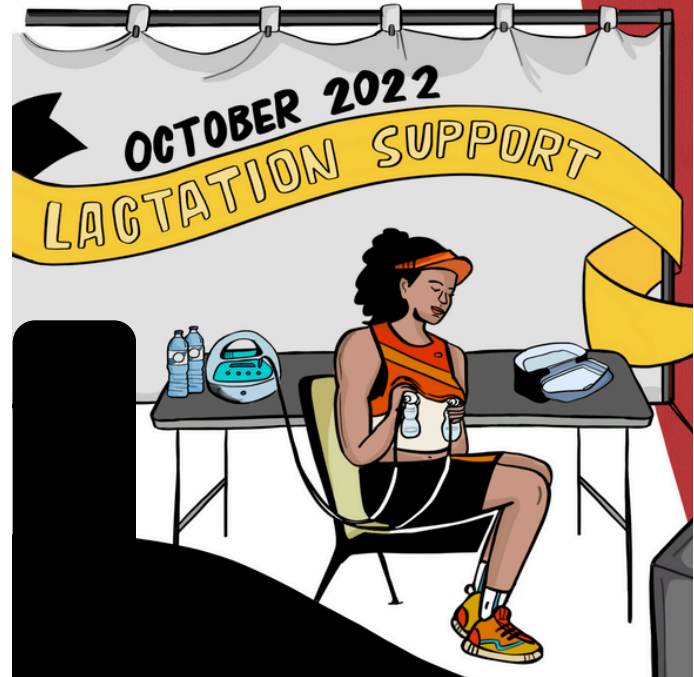




## 2022 October

### New York Road Runners and &Mother implement nursing stations

- NYRR partnered with &Mother to provide private nursing tents for New York City Marathon mothers in addition to transporting nursing pumps from the start to finish area for runner-mothers



## 2023

### Additional race deferral options for athletes

- Races have begun to include additional deferral options for various athletes
- e.g., Ultra-Trail du Mont-Blanc extended deferrals for not only pregnant athletes, but also for those who have a pregnant partner, are adopting, or using a surrogate parent

## 2024

### Nearly 20% of the USA Olympic Marathon Trials women's field represented by mothers

- &Mother and Vita Coco also partnered to initiate the "ChangeMaker" grant, which led to three \$5,000 grants being awarded to the top 3 female mothers at the 2024 USA Olympic Marathon Trials





## Calls to Action

- Though we have come a long way, elite female athletes continue to face discriminatory policies and practices
- How can we continue to progress the degree to which female athletes are supported through pregnancy and motherhood?

## THE SPRINT



More evidence-based research



Greater education for coaches and sporting organizations



More transparent policies and practices across the sports industry

## THE MARATHON

- **Gender equity policy recommendations for athletic governing bodies**
  - Similar to those developed by &Mother, which were primarily geared towards corporate sponsors and contracts
- **Extend gender equity policy work and frameworks beyond just athletic governing bodies**
  - E.g., sport governing bodies may receive their funding from the government level; to this end, greater education concerning the importance of these policies needs to be extended as widely as possible
- **Athletic governing bodies and elite sport organizations to adopt best practices and improve industry-wide standards to support pregnant/parenting female athletes**
  - E.g., on-site childcare provisions for championships (this initiative seen at the USATF Champs was brought forth by &Mother in partnership with Allyson Felix and *Athleta*. These undertakings should be carried out by sponsors/major athletic apparel companies, governing bodies, etc.)
- **The call for explicit focus on gender equity means that we must also recognize elite male athletes' and gender-nonconforming individuals' roles in parenting duties**
  - Failing to acknowledge how fathers are involved in parenthood results in an increased burden that falls on women/female athletes
  - We need to normalize that fathers who are elite athletes also participate in caregiving responsibilities - which can, in turn, alleviate the parenting burden that may fall on women
- **Increase athletes' access to key resources**
  - E.g., detailed physical activity guidelines for pregnant/parenting elite athletes, access to proper treatment such as a pelvic floor specialists, etc.