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## Modern Trends in the Development of Women's Wrestling

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**Abstract.** The history of the development of women's wrestling as an Olympic sport is considered in the article from the point of view of the statistical indicators dynamics (the period 1985–2021): changes in the number of participating countries in international competitions and the number of athletes declared from each participating country. The analyzed competitions: the World Cup, the World Women's Wrestling Championship and the Olympic Games. The purpose of the study is to assess the current state and development trends of women's wrestling in the world.

Analysis of scientific and methodological literature, statistical database processing United World Wrestling (UWW) – <https://uww.org/>. The indicators of the participating countries number in women's wrestling international competitions and the number of athletes declared from each participating country were analyzed.

The results obtained complement the theoretical section of the sports development history, the history of the Olympic Games and the wrestling development history. Describing the current state of women's wrestling, it can be noted that this type of wrestling is developing in 186 countries of the world, including Africa – 47, South and North America – 33, Asia – 40, Europe – 48 and Oceania – 18.

The analysis revealed that the main trends in the development of women's wrestling in the world are the following directions: 1) the development of women's wrestling takes place within the sports wrestling development general history framework in the world, since women's wrestling competitions follow the rules of freestyle wrestling; 2) the development of women's wrestling as an independent sport (discipline) begins in the 1980s with the first international competitions and reaches its peak after being included in the program of the Olympic Games; 3) there is a high rate of the different countries women's wrestling development (first of all, an increase in the number of participating countries and athletes participating in world championships, and secondly, an increase in the list of countries participating at least once in the Olympic Games); 4) the holding of the Olympic Games leads to a sharp increase in the number of countries, since a significant increase in the number of countries developing women's wrestling was observed in 2008–2009 after being included in the program of the Olympic Games; 5) the achievement of the modern level of

development of women's wrestling became possible in 30 years, but women's wrestling became the third female martial art (after judo and taekwondo) included in the program of the Summer Olympic Games. Statistical analysis confirms the need to maintain the Olympic status for this sport for further positive dynamics in the development of women's wrestling.

**Keywords:** women's wrestling, history, olympic sport, world cup, Olympic games, summer Olympic games, world championship.

Research area: theory and methodology of physical education, sport training, recreational and adapted physical education

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## Современные тенденции развития женской борьбы

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**Аннотация.** История развития женской борьбы как олимпийского вида спорта рассмотрена с точки зрения динамики статистических показателей (период 1985–2021 гг.): изменения численности стран, участвующих в соревнованиях международного уровня, и количества спортсменов, заявленных от каждой страны-участницы. Проанализированы соревнования – Кубок мира, чемпионат мира по женской борьбе и Олимпийские игры. Цель исследования – оценить современное состояние и тенденции развития женской борьбы в мире.

Проведен анализ научно-методической литературы, а также статистическая обработка базы данных United World Wrestling (UWW) – <https://uww.org/>. Рассмотрены показатели численности стран-участниц в соревнованиях международного уровня по женской борьбе и количества спортсменов, заявленных от каждой страны-участницы. Полученные результаты дополняют теоретический раздел истории развития спорта, истории проведения Олимпийских игр и истории развития спортивной борьбы.

Характеризуя современное состояние женской борьбы, можно отметить, что этот вид развивается в 186 странах мира, среди которых страны Африки – 47, Южной и Северной Америки – 33, Азии – 40, Европы – 48 и Океании – 18.

В ходе анализа выявлено, что основными тенденциями развития женской борьбы в мире можно назвать следующие: 1) развитие женской борьбы происходит в рамках общей истории развития спортивной борьбы в мире, так как соревнования здесь идут по правилам вольной борьбы; 2) женская борьба как самостоятельный вид спорта (дисциплины) начинается с 1980-х годов с проведения первых международных соревнований и достигает своего пика после включения в программу Олимпийских игр; 3) высокий темп развития женской борьбы отмечен в разных странах мира (в первую очередь по росту количества стран-участниц и спортсменок-участниц в чемпионатах мира, во вторую – по увеличению списка стран, хоть единожды

участвовавших в Олимпийских играх); 4) проведение Олимпийских игр приводит к резкому увеличению количества участниц, так как значительный прирост числа стран, развивающих женскую борьбу, наблюдался в 2008–2009 гг. после включения в программу Олимпийских игр; 5) современный уровень развития женской борьбы достигнут за 30 лет, причем она стала третьим женским видом единоборств (после дзюдо и тхэквондо), включенным в программу летних Олимпийских игр. Статистический анализ подтверждает необходимость сохранять олимпийский статус этого вида спорта для дальнейшей положительной динамики в темпах развития женской борьбы.

**Ключевые слова:** женская борьба, история, олимпийский вид спорта, чемпионат мира, Олимпийские игры, Кубок мира, летние Олимпийские игры.

Научная специальность: 5.8.5 – теория и методика спорта.

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**Introduction.** Women's wrestling is a modern type of martial arts cultivated in the world, the main of which is the skill of performing various tactical and technical actions in order to put an opponent on the shoulder blades (touch) or achieve an advantage on points. Women's wrestling is a type of wrestling where competitions are held among women according to the rules of freestyle wrestling.

### Theoretical framework

Women's wrestling, as well as freestyle, Greco-Roman wrestling, recognized Olympic sports, is being developed under the auspices of the international organization United World Wrestling. The UWW leadership notes that with the recognition of women's wrestling as an Olympic discipline, a hundred years after the introduction of wrestling into the Olympic program, the development of world wrestling has entered a new era [<https://uww.org/ru>]. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the formation and development of women's wrestling as an independent discipline and an Olympic sport, therefore, it was considered appropriate to consider the main trends in the development of women's wrestling in the world from the revival of the Olympic Games of modern times to the present day.

Wrestling has always been popular among all peoples. As one of the oldest sports,

in 1896 it was included in the program of the I Olympic Games of the new time, which were held in Athens (Greece). The decision of the first Olympic Congress (1894) at the Sorbonne identified ten sports that would be part of the Olympic program: athletics, Greco-Roman wrestling, rowing, cycling, fencing, gymnastics, weightlifting, swimming, shooting and tennis. Athletes from twelve countries participated in these games (Ageveets, Polikarpova, 1996). 13 countries – Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, Denmark, USA, France, Chile, Switzerland, Sweden and, of course, Greece (Khvostova, 2013; Lampros et al., 1897; Athens et al., 2009). Five wrestlers from four countries took part in the wrestling competitions: Great Britain, Hungary, Germany and Greece. In 1900, the II Olympic Games in Paris (France) were held without Greco-Roman wrestling. In 1904, only freestyle wrestling was included in the program of the III Olympic Games in St. Louis (USA), and places on the podium were contested only by wrestlers from the USA (Malon, 1984).

After the international recognition of both styles of wrestling, the need arose to create the first International Federation for the Development of Wrestling (and Weightlifting), an initiative taken by the German Athletes' Association (Deutsche Athleten-Verband) in 1905.

In 1908, at the IV Olympic Games in London (Great Britain), for the first time, tournaments were held simultaneously among freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestlers from fourteen countries (Mallon, 1998)

The first International Union of Wrestlers (Internationaler Ring Verband) was organized on the eve of the V Olympic Games in Stockholm (Sweden) in 1912. These games only featured Greco-Roman wrestling, with athletes from fourteen countries taking part (Wrestling..., 1913). In 1913, the first wrestling congress was held in Berlin, which was attended by delegates from Germany, Finland, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic and Great Britain. However, in 1916, the VI Summer Olympic Games in Berlin (Germany) were canceled due to the First World War. In 1920, at the VII Olympic Games in Antwerp (Belgium), wrestling competitions were held in two styles – Greco-Roman and freestyle, nineteen countries participated (Report..., 1920). After such mass competitions during the Olympic Congress of the International Olympic Committee in Lausanne in 1921, the International Amateur Wrestling Federation was created. In 1924, representatives of twenty-six (229 athletes) contested the Olympic medals, in 1928 – twenty-nine (169 athletes); 1932 – eighteen (79 athletes); 1936 – twenty-nine countries (200 athletes), etc. In subsequent years, wrestling was approved at the Olympic Games in two styles, the number of athletes who competed for medals only grew. However, according to the principles of the Olympic Charter, approved by the International Sports Congress (Paris, 1894), women could participate in competitions, but only on an equal basis with men.

In Tokyo in 1954, the federation was renamed the International Amateur Wrestling Federation (FILA1). In 2002, FILA entered a new era, marked by such things as the introduction of women's wrestling into the Olympic program, the inclusion of female representatives in the leadership of continental, national and regional federations, the appearance of the first female international judges, etc. Since 2014, the mission of promoting and developing wrestling in all its styles on all continents has

been carried out by the reformed FILA – the United World of Wrestling (UWW).

### **Statement of the problem**

Currently, women's wrestling is developing in 186 countries of the world, among which 47 are African countries, 33 – South and North America, 40 – Asia, 48 – Europe and 18 – Oceania. In total, 32 world championships in women's wrestling were held, in which athletes from more than twenty countries of the world took part (max in 2018–26 participating countries). Five Olympic tournaments have been held (from 2004 to 2021). However, analyzing the current state of the women's wrestling development level in the world, the indicators of the number of athletes participating and countries participating in the Olympic Games cannot be an indicator of assessing the current state and development trends of women's wrestling in the world. After all, in order to participate in the Olympic Games, each national federation must have the right to represent its participant in each weight category.

### **Methods**

Analysis of scientific and methodological literature, statistical processing of the United World Wrestling (UWW) database – <https://uww.org/>. The indicators of the number of countries participating in international competitions in women's wrestling and the number of athletes declared from each country to participate in these competitions were processed.

### **Discussion**

The first mention of holding international women's wrestling competitions dates back to the mid-1980s. According to the information provided in the UWW database [<https://uww.org/ru/>], The first official international competitions in women's wrestling were held in August 1985 at the World Wrestling Festival in Kolbotn (Norway). It is known that the competitions were held in seven weight categories (up to 44, 48, 52, 56, 60, 65, 70 kg), where twenty-two athletes from four countries of the world contested their leadership: Norway, France, Sweden and Finland. In 1986, the number of countries participating in the re-run of

these competitions increased to six teams. The national teams of France, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Japan and Sweden took part in the competition. The weight categories number also increased, the rules of the competition provided for the weight category “over 70 kg”. The number of athletes who took part in the competitions increased slightly (Fig. 1).

The first World Women's Wrestling Championship was held in October 1987 in Lorenskog (Norway). Athletes from eight countries came to participate in the first world championship: France, Norway, Belgium, Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland. At subsequent World Championships, the number of teams did not remain constant, but changed either up or down. So the largest number of participating countries was recorded at the 2018 World Championships in Budapest (Hungary). Twenty-six teams took part in these competitions: Japan, USA, Canada, Bulgaria, China, Ukraine, Finland, Turkey, Mongolia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, France, Hungary, India, North Korea, Austria, Cuba, Poland, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Romania, Brazil, Egypt, Norway, Russia, Mexico. The smallest number of teams, not counting the first championship, was represented at the 2016 World Championship in Budapest (Hungary). This year, in connection with the XXXI Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the international federation “United World Wrestling (UWW)” decided to hold the championship only in weight categories that are not included in the program of the Olympic Games – up to 55 and 60 kg, as a result of which athletes from only nine coun-

tries came to the competition: Japan, China, the USA, Russia, Canada, Belarus, Hungary, Mongolia and Kazakhstan (Fig. 2). In 2020, the world championship in both women's, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling did not take place. The UWW has made the decision to cancel the World Championships in December 2020 in Belgrade, Serbia, as many national teams have experienced difficulties in organizing travel between countries and a number of other quarantine measures related to the spread of COVID SARS-CoV-2. Instead of the World Cup, an individual World Cup was held at the same time. The 2021 World Championship was held in September in Oslo (Norway), for which athletes from 23 countries arrived: Japan, USA, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Bulgaria, India, Russia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Estonia, Mongolia, Ukraine, Canada, Sweden, Poland, Turkey, Egypt, France, Ecuador, Brazil, Czech Republic, Romania, Belarus. The dynamics of the number of countries participating in the world championships is shown in Figure 2, the dynamics of the number of athletes participating and the growth rate of their number at the World Championships in women's wrestling is shown in Fig. 3.

Despite the variation in the participants number and the number of teams declared for participation in the world championships, the regression analysis clearly made it possible to determine the high rates of women's wrestling development in the world. Figure 2 shows the trend of women's wrestling increasing popularity in various countries, which illustrates the trend lines as a geometric display element of

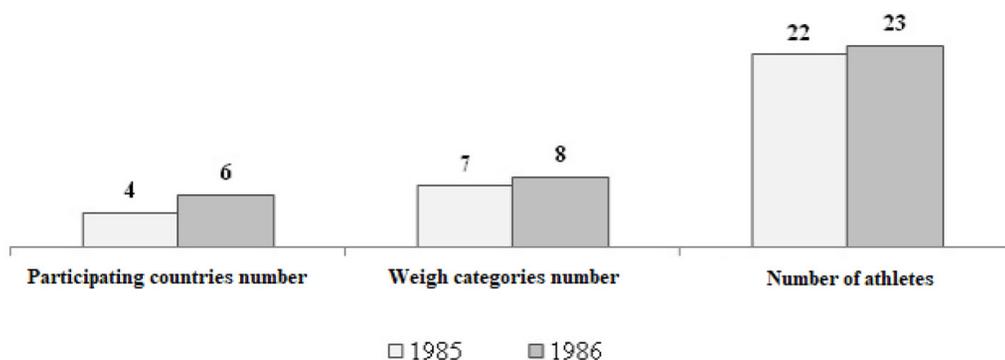


Fig. 1. The first official international competitions in women's wrestling

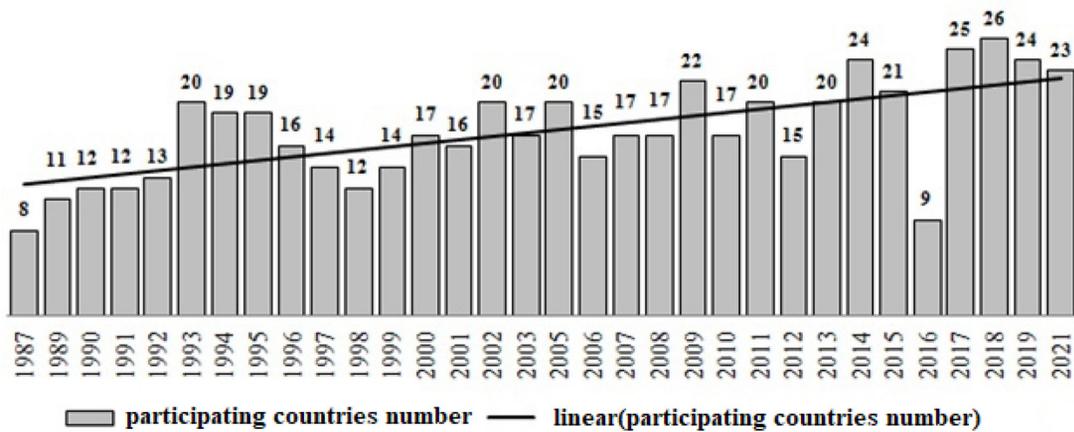


Fig. 2. The number of countries participating in the world women's wrestling championships (1987–2019)

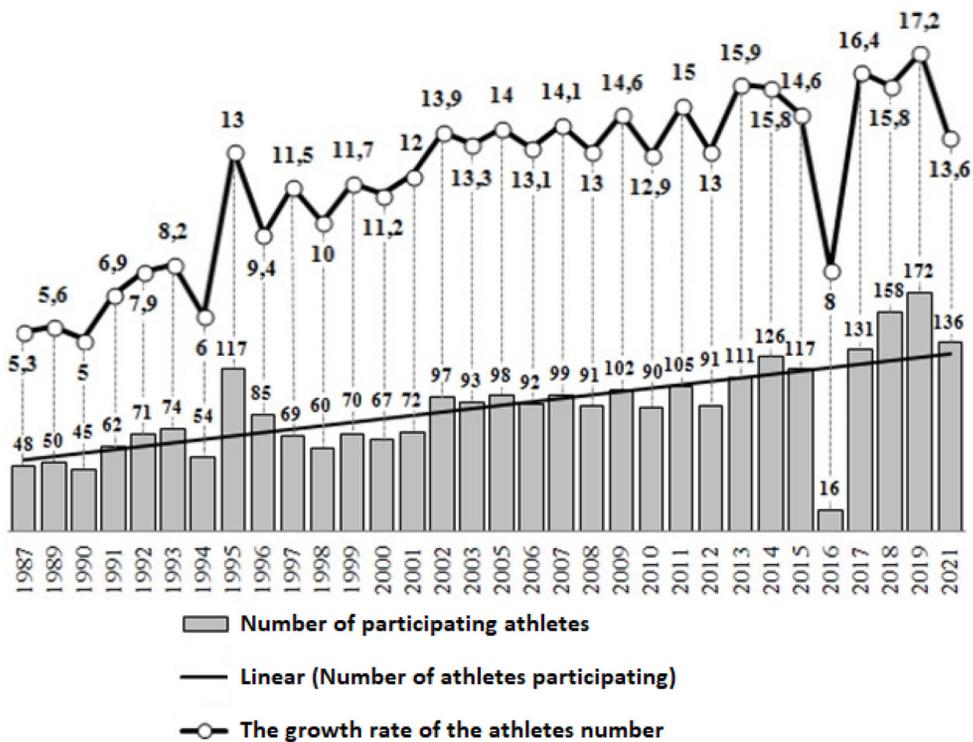


Fig. 3. The number of athletes participating and the participants number growth rate in weight categories at the World Championships in women's wrestling (1987–2019)

the indicators average values of the participants declared teams number

Due to the fact that the World Cup is an international (global) sports competition, in which teams or individual athletes represent-

ing their countries participate and compete for the title of world champion. Unlike the Olympic Games, World Wrestling Championships are held annually and are the second most important international competition. From the

identifying trends point of view in the women's wrestling development in the world, the analysis and assessment growth indicators in the participating countries number and the increase in the number of athletes participating in these competitions will be more objective, since the selection of athletes for participation is carried out at the level of the national championship, and, therefore, states in which a sufficient level of this sport development. Comparing the number of participating countries in the time series shown in the figure, we see an increase in the number of participating countries (the trend line in Figure 3 clearly illustrates this trend). Since the first world champion (1987) and the last pre-COVID world championship (2019), the number of states entering these competitions has grown by 3.6 times. If we compare the participants number of in the competitions weight categories in the same time series with the same level of the first World Championship, taken as a comparison base, then the growth rate is expressed by a value of 17.2 times (Figure 3).

Since 2001, the Women's Wrestling Team World Cup has been held annually, with the exception of 2016, the year of the XXXI Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). Unlike individual competitions, as a result of which the places of all participants in their weight categories are determined, in team competitions only team places are determined based on the results of the athletes-representatives meetings of teams in each weight category, where any victory of an athlete brings one point to his team. In this case, the teams must be fully

staffed, and for each missing athlete, the team automatically loses one point. The holding of such tournaments among women became possible due to the development of women's wrestling in different countries of the world, which once again confirms the tendency to popularize this sport.

Only those teams that were among the strongest teams according to the results of the team standings of the previous World Cup can participate in the World Cup. Between 2001 and 2019, between five and eight national teams were allowed to participate in the tournament. At the first world team competition in women's wrestling, which took place in the city of Levallois (France), the status of the strongest was contested by teams from six countries: Japan, China, the USA, Russia, Canada and France. In 2020, due to the current situation in the world related to the coronavirus infection, the format of the World Cup was changed from team competition to an individual tournament, with the results of the team standings based on the number of medals won. As a result, twenty national teams were allowed to participate in the competition, including teams from the following countries: Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Ukraine, Germany, Belarus, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Poland, India, Czech Republic, Latvia, Azerbaijan, Slovakia, Canada, Peru, Argentina, Italy, Romania (Fig. 4).

Since 2004, women's wrestling has been included in the competition program of the Summer Olympic Games, which confirms the world recognition of this sport. The inclusion of women's wrestling in the Olympic program

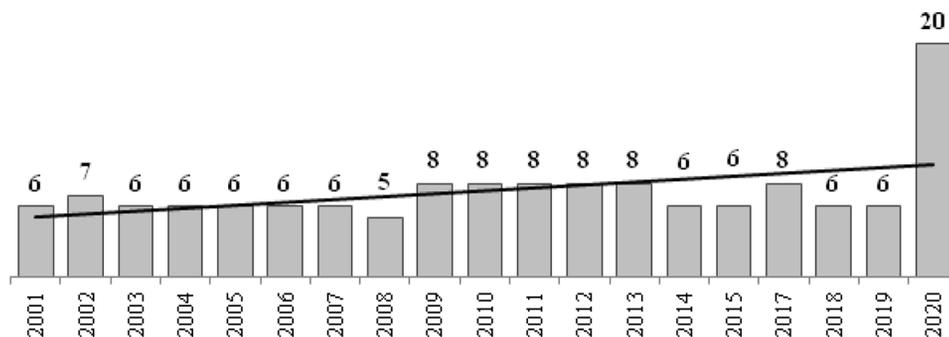


Fig. 4. Number of countries participating in the Women's Wrestling World Cups (2001–2020)

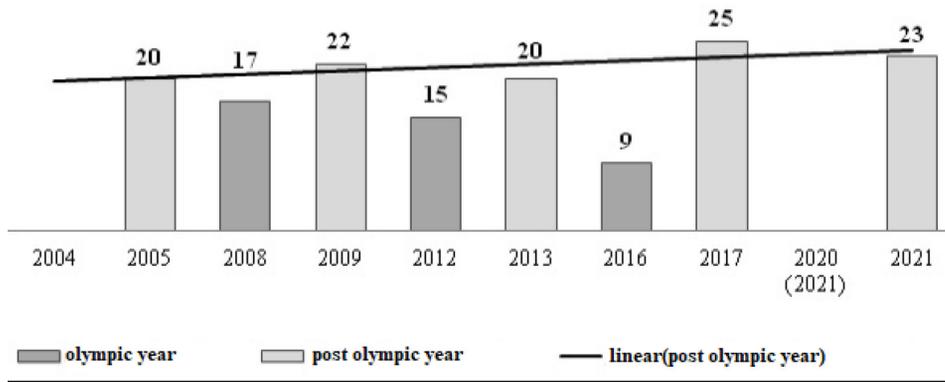


Fig. 5. Dynamics of the number of countries participating in the world championships in women's wrestling in the post-Olympic year (2004–2021)

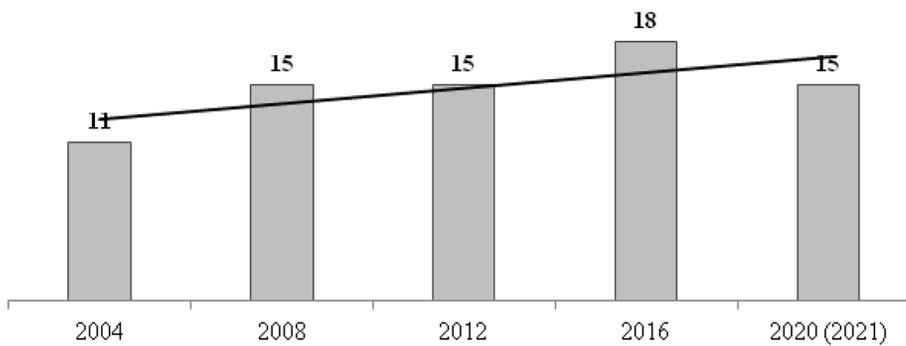


Fig. 6. Number of countries participating in women's wrestling competitions at the Summer Olympic Games (2004–2016)

indicates the important role that women's wrestling plays in world sports. Only the acquisition of Olympic status (for women's summer sports) for a sport requires its cultivation in at least forty countries on three continents.

In addition, the regression analysis of the teams number participating in the World Championships, especially in the years after the Olympic Games, clearly reflects the trend towards an increase in the activity of the participating countries. And in this regard, we can confidently state that the female representatives number involved in wrestling is increasing in the world (Fig. 5).

As part of the XXVIII Summer Olympic Games held in Athens (Greece), athletes from eleven countries took part in women's wrestling competitions: Japan, Ukraine, China, USA, Canada, Russia, France, Sweden, Greece, Ger-

many and Belarus. Fifteen teams have already entered for the women's wrestling competitions in 2008 and 2012 – at the XXIX Summer Olympic Games in Beijing (China) and the XXX Summer Olympic Games in London (Great Britain). In 2016, at the XXXI Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the number of participating countries increased to eighteen teams. At the XXXII Summer Olympic Games, which were originally supposed to be held in 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic by decision of the International Olympic Committee participants from fifteen countries arrived in 2021 (Fig. 6).

The participating athletes indicators in the Olympic Games cannot be a criterion for assessing current trends in the development of women's wrestling in the world, since the participating athletes quotas are determined

Table 1. Distribution of participants in the Olympic Games by country and year

Participating countries	Number of participants by years				
	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020
Japan	4	4	4	6	6
Ukraine	4	4	4		5
China	4	4	3	5	6
USA	4	4	4	4	6
Canada	4	4	4	6	
Russia	4	4	3	5	6
France	3	3			
Sweden	2	3		4	
Greece	4				
Germany	3				2
Belarus	1		2	2	3
Bulgaria		2	1	3	4
Kazakhstan		4	3	4	
Azerbaijan		3	2	3	2
Colombia		1	3		
Poland		2	2	4	
Spain		2	1		
Romania		2			
Mongolia			4		6
Senegal			1		
Tunis				2	
India				3	
Kamerun				3	1
Argentina				1	
Egypt				2	
Venezuela				3	
Kyrgyzstan				1	3
Nigeria					4
Turkey					2
Latvia					1
Amount:					
Pacticipating countries	11	15	15	18	15
Weight categories	4	4	4	6	6
Athletes	37	46	41	61	57

by Olympic licenses, in this regard we decided to analyze the Olympic Games participating countries dynamics by year. Table 1 presents a list of participating countries, so in 2004 there

were eleven countries – Japan, Ukraine, China, USA, Canada, Russia, France, Sweden, Greece, Germany and Belarus; in 2008 (15 countries) for the first time received an Olym-

pic license – Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Poland, Spain and Romania; in 2012 – Mongolia, Senegal; in 2016 – Tunisia, India, Cameroon, Argentina, Egypt, Venezuela and Kyrgyzstan; in 2021 (2020) – Nigeria, Turkey and Latvia. Thus, the number of participating countries (at least once participating in the tournament) from the year when women's wrestling was included in the program of the Olympic Games and up to this year has expanded to 30.

Another criterion for the popularization of women's wrestling was the fact of a weight categories number increase (Table 1) included in the Olympic games program since 2016. Given the increase in the number of weight categories, there is an increase in the number of participants, but this trend cannot be objective due to the strict system for selecting candidates for the Olympic teams of countries, regulated by the IOC rules.

**Conclusion / Results.** Describing the current state of women's wrestling, it can be noted that this type of wrestling is developing in 186 countries of the world, including Africa – 47, South and North America – 33, Asia – 40, Europe – 48 and Oceania – 18.

The analysis revealed that the main trends in the development of women's wrestling in the world are the following directions: 1) the women's wrestling development takes place within the general history frame-

work of this sports development in the world, since women's wrestling competitions follow the freestyle wrestling rules; 2) the development of women's wrestling as an independent sport (discipline) begins in the 1980s with the first international competitions and reaches its peak after being included in the Olympic Games; 3) there is a worldwide women's wrestling development (first of all, an increase in the number of participating countries and athletes participating in world championships, and secondly an increase in the list of countries participating at least once in the Olympic Games); 4) the holding of the Olympic Games leads to a sharp increase in the countries number, since a significant increase in the number of countries developing women's wrestling was significant during 2008–2009 after being included in the program of the Olympic Games; 5) the present level of modern women's wrestling was attained in 30 years, but women's wrestling became the third female martial art (after judo and taekwondo) included in the program of the Summer Olympic Games. Statistical analysis confirms the need to maintain the Olympic status for further positive dynamics in the development of women's wrestling.

The results obtained complement the theoretical section of the sports development history, the Olympic Games history and the history of the wrestling development.

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