

Title IX Is 50 but Women's Sports Still Get Less Than 50% of Resources

[Katie Lever](#)



A half century later, women's college sports is still viewed as an obligation instead of an opportunity.
AP/Eric Gay

I'm not looking forward to the 50th anniversary of [Title IX](#).

That might be surprising coming from a former Division I athlete who has greatly benefited from the law, but the lack of critical discourse surrounding milestone anniversaries of historic events gets old fast. Looking ahead to June, I'm preparing for overwhelmingly celebratory claims that women's sports are equal to men's thanks to Title IX.

If that were true, it would be cause for celebration. But the reality is that female college athletes have yet to see the promise of Title IX. The [NCAA](#)'s most recent [financial data](#) from Title IX's 45th anniversary indicate that Division I women's programs at FBS institutions only receive 18% of total operating expenses, 29% of recruiting dollars, and 41% of scholarship allocations.

Ironically, this data is located at the [NCAA's website](#) dedicated to the

50th anniversary of Title IX.

It's not altogether unusual for those participating in inequity to celebrate those they are hurting. [Karen Hartman](#) discusses this dynamic in her rhetorical analysis of ESPN's **television** coverage of Title IX's 40th anniversary, which she argues, emphasized a mythologized sense of equality and consequently ignored real systemic inequities. In doing so, **the network** capitalized on the celebration while evading "serious discussions of the law and its implications," including that roughly 80% of universities are not Title IX compliant. [Hartman's analysis](#) also revealed that although ESPN relentlessly promoted Title IX coverage to celebrate its 40th anniversary, *SportsCenter* consistently dedicated 5% (or less) of its coverage to women's sports.

A decade later, not much has changed—the NCAA's 50th anniversary website is celebrating female athletes without tangibly supporting them.

What *has* changed is the popularity of women's sports. After expanding the women's field to 68 teams and marketing the women's tournament with the iconic "March Madness" trademark for the first time, viewership of the 2022 women's [Final Four](#) increased by 20%. The national championship game saw [similar gains](#) with viewership increases of 18%, a record-breaking 4.85 million viewers, and [a sell-out crowd](#) at Target Center, a venue that might be too small for its fanbase (that's also a [consistent complaint](#) about the USA Softball Hall of Fame Stadium, where the Women's College World Series is held each year).

Brands saw this surge coming—[ESPN's ad inventory](#) for the women's tournament sold out to corporations such as Unilever, Sirius XM and Buick, whose ["See Her Greatness"](#) ad campaign that ran throughout

March addressed that women's sports still get less than [10% of sports news coverage](#).

Buick's simple but brilliant ads, featuring iconic moments in women's college sports replayed behind black screens, raise the question: How can the women's sports industry reach its full potential if female athletes aren't visible? More subtly, the brand power behind the campaign demonstrates that in spite of limited resources, women's sports are a lucrative business venture.

Imagine what the 60th anniversary of Title IX could look like if women's sports were viewed as an opportunity rather than an obligation.

Katie Lever, a former collegiate runner, is currently pursuing her doctorate in rhetoric and language at the University of Texas, with a focus on NCAA discourse. A member of The Drake Group, Lever recently testified before Congress on the subject of college athlete rights.