

# OCUA'S RATIO O FAQ

## Introduction to Ratio O

OCUA is implementing a big change across 7v7 summer leagues. **For summer 2020, OCUA will be using a new gender ratio (we are calling it Ratio O) to give men and women equal representation on the field.** Ratio O evolved out of the gender ratio pilots we ran this fall, and means that minimum number of women required on the field will switch each point, between 3 women required on the field and 4 women required on the field. The rest of the seven spots will be filled by players using the open gender category.

**Essentially, this means a team who likes to have two full lines of players would now build a roster with 7 women players and 7 open players** (at OCUA, these are typically men, but don't have to be – read more about gender designations and play time [here](#)), as opposed to 6 women players and 8 open players last summer.

Like any big change, we know the transition may be uncomfortable for some teams. We've developed this FAQ document in the hopes that it answers some of your questions and provides everyone with a clear vision as to what Ratio O will look like at a typical league game.

We've divided this document up into a few different sections based on the nature of the information you might be seeking: Ratio O and Game Play, Building a Team for Ratio O, and Getting to this Decision.

## Ratio O and Game Play

### What is Ratio O?

Ratio O is OCUA's very own gender ratio – as far as we know, no other Ultimate league is using the ratio we have decided to implement this summer. It evolved out of the gender ratio pilots we ran last fall (2019), and means that minimum number of women required on the field will switch each point, between 3 women required on the field and 4 women required on the field. The rest of the seven spots will be filled by players using the open gender category.

So, say the captains decide to run the first point with the minimum ratio of women players on the field as 3. For that point, both teams would have to put at least 3 women on the field, and could fill the other 4 spots with any player (using the open designation for gender, you can read more about that [here](#)). The next point, the minimum number of women players on the field would be 4 for each team, and the other three spots could be filled by players who use the open designation.

**The goal of Ratio O is to provide equal representation and play time opportunities for everyone.**

Because 7 on 7 Ultimate puts an uneven number of players on the field for each team, switching the minimum requirement of women on the field every point is one way to achieve this.

This means a team who likes to have two full lines of players would now build a roster with 7 women players and 7 open players. You can read more about structuring a team for Ratio O in the next section of this document.

### What is meant by minimum requirement for women players? Is this the same as a gender ratio?

We know that using the term “minimum requirement for women players” is awkward and wordy. However, we want to be clear about what Ratio O means for league teams. Previously, OCUA used a gender ratio – we said teams must play a gender ratio of 4:3 every point – but we wanted Ratio O to reflect that gender is not binary, so we have moved to a minimum requirement for women players. So while you may refer to Ratio O as a gender ratio (it's a lot faster!), it is really just a minimum requirement for women players.

This means that every point the only requirement for teams putting out a line of players in OCUA 7v7 coed summer leagues is to meet the minimum number of women required to play that point. All other spots can be filled by any player (open category). You can read more about the terminology OCUA is adopting around gender in [this document](#).

We know that using a minimum requirement for women players isn't perfect but we feel it meets a balance of creating and designating space for women, which can be challenging in coed sports, while also creating a space for players who don't recognize themselves in the traditional man/woman binary of coed sports. It also aligns to the approach taken by our governing bodies and international Ultimate organizations, who have divisions for women and open players.

## How do we determine which minimum requirement for women players we use to start the game?

The minimum requirement for women players used to start the game will be determined by captains at the beginning of the game. Though captains are always welcome to come to decisions in other ways, in absence of any other agreement the captains will use an additional flip to determine the minimum number of women on the field, with the winning captain selecting whether they would like to start the game with at least 3 or 4 women on the field.

To ensure this is very clear, let's walk through a hypothetical situation. Joe is the captain of one team and Maria is captain of the other. When the two captains meet before the game, as they did last year they do an initial flip to determine who will pull to start the game and which endzone each team will start from. Joe wins that flip and elects to pull to start so that his team can start on defence. Since Joe elected to pull, Maria gets to pick what endzone she would like her team to start on; she elects to have her team start on the north side of the field so that they will be playing down wind to start the game. Now, starting this summer in 2020, the captains will do another disc flip to determine the minimum number of women on for the first point. Imagine Maria wins the second flip. She gets to decide if she wants the minimum number of women players to be 3 or 4 to start the game. She notices a couple of her open players are still lacing up their cleats, so she decides to start the game with at least 4 women for either team on the field. The second point would then require 3 women per team on the field. The minimum continues to switch between 3 or 4 every point.

We've developed a [Ratio O infographic](#) to help captains figure out how to start games.

## What happens after half with regards to the minimum requirement for women players?

Continue to swap the minimum requirement for women players the point after half as if half time did not happen. So, if the minimum requirement for women players the point before half was 4, the point after half the minimum requirement for women players would be 3.

Since the teams switch endzones to start half, by continuing to alternate the minimum requirement for women players from the first half, you also swap the endzone that each team is scoring on for a given minimum requirement for women players, which should help to offset any environmental factors or other conditions for the two teams.

## How do we communicate the change in minimum requirement for women players between points?

Since the minimum requirement for women players will switch every point, teams should not need to communicate about the requirement between points (unlike what you may have experienced if you played in our Ratio B pilot in the Fall of 2019, where a team chooses what gender ratio they will use each point). However, WFDF does have symbols teams can use to communicate about the number of women they have on the field, if required (for example, if one team has mixed up what the minimum

requirement is for a point and does not have enough women on the line for a point). We have provided illustrations of those symbols below:



**Minimum 3 women on the field**

Palms together, arms raised  
straight above head



**Minimum 4 women on the field**

Hands clasped and raised above  
head, arms bent

(page 23 of [WFDF Rules](#))

### What if one team does not meet the minimum requirement for women players in a point?

OCUA will use the WFDF rules as a foundation when one team is playing without enough women on the field.

If one team does not meet the minimum number of women required for a point and has men or non-women players on the field instead, the opposing team may call a violation and stop the play. If the offending team (the team without enough women on the field) is the team to notice, they may call a time out to stop the play.

If the offending team notices and calls a timeout, they may choose which of their players will be removed and which woman (or women) will be added to meet the minimum requirement for women on the field. The opposition is then able to make the same number of substitutions the offending team made, should they wish.

If the opposing team notices and calls a violation first, then the opposing team has two choices. First, they can choose to restart the play as if the offending team called a timeout to make the appropriate substitution. In this situation or the previous situation where the offending team calls a timeout, this timeout counts against their number of timeouts for the game. Otherwise, the opposing team that called a violation can elect to restart the point entirely, starting with a repull.

If either team notices a team did not meet the minimum requirement for that point after the goal has been scored, by prior to the pull starting the next point, the opposition can choose to nullify the goal and restart the point, should they wish.

If either team notices after the next pull has been thrown, the result of the previous point stands and the game continues as is no transgression occurred.

*It is important to note this rule only applies when a team has put too many men on the field in place of women players. If a team does not have enough women and plays shorthanded, that is considered in keeping with the Spirit of the minimum requirement for women players.*

### What if a team cannot field enough women to meet the minimum requirement for women players?

A team who cannot field enough women to meet the minimum requirement for women players has two options:

1. The team can play shorthanded and leave the spaces designated for women without players in them. For example, if a team could only put two women on the field for a point, if the minimum number of women players for that point was 3 the team could play with 2 women and 4 open players. *If a team elects to play shorthanded, the opposing team is still able to put all seven players on the field, provided they are adhering to the minimum number of women players required for that point.*
2. The team can default if they will not have sufficient women to play the game. In this case, [OCUA's default policy](#) will be put in effect. Should a team default, the teams are still welcome to scrimmage for fun.

If both captains agree, teams are also welcome to use the captain's clause to over-ride Ratio O (or any other rules as long as the safety of and respect for players is maintained). For example, the captains could use the captain's clause to play the entire game with a reduced minimum requirement for women, use a static 4:3 gender ratio, or play 6v6. ***The captain's clause can only be used when both teams willingly agree to the revised rules. In situations where captains cannot agree, OCUA's league rules will be used.*** Captains should not feel pressured to captain's clause rule changes if it will create a negative experience for players on their team. Captains are also reminded that politely disagreeing with a proposal is not grounds for docking Spirit points.

### What if extreme conditions make having the minimum requirement for women players switch every point less fun for the lines playing with a specific requirement?

We recognize that this is a pretty technical question that will only be relevant to some teams. If you feel overwhelmed by this question, you can skip over it.

Some teams use advanced systems, strategies and line calling to give their teams the best possible chance at scoring each point. For some of these teams, certain environmental conditions might mean Ratio O creates a less fun experience. For example, imagine a very strong wind was blowing from the north end zone of a field to the south end zone. Using Ratio O, one team would always be playing with a minimum of 3 women players trying to score up- wind and a minimum of 4 women players trying to score down- wind for an entire half (and vice versa for the other team). If both these teams feel this is creating an unfair strategic advantage or a negative experience, the captains are encouraged to use the captain's clause to instead use [Gender Rule Ratio A](#). Here, the minimum number of women players required stays the same for two points at a time and thus does not align the swap in number of women required on the field with a swap in up-wind/down-wind points.

***The captain's clause is only to be used when both teams willingly agree to the revised rules. In situations where captains cannot agree, OCUA's league rules will be used.*** Captains should not feel pressured to captain's clause rule changes if it will create a negative experience for players on their team. Captains are also reminded that politely disagreeing with a proposal is not grounds for docking Spirit points.

## Building a Team for Ratio O

### What is the ideal number of players for a team under Ratio O?

Every team is different in terms of how many players they like to have rostered – most years we see some teams that only roster the minimum number of players required to have 7 on the field at any time and other teams that like two full lines and a few spares - we trust each team's captains to decide what is best for their team. We have provided a few scenarios below to help you make decisions for your teams:

**A team that likes to have two full lines of players should now build a roster with 7 women players and 7 open players** (at OCUA, these are typically men players, but don't have to be – read more about gender designations and play time here), as opposed to 6 women players and 8 open players in previous summers.

**A team that likes to play savage (which means they have no spares) should build a roster with 4 women players and 4 open players.** Alternatively, they could build a team with only 7 players, but 4 of those players would have to be women and one of those women would have to be prepared to mark up against a man or open player every other point.

**A team that likes a few subs should now typically have an equal number of women and open players on their roster.** We expect a lot of teams might decide to play with a roster of 6 and 6, so that players can double up points occasionally or go 8 and 8 so that players can occasionally take a few points off. We recognize that teams have players who play in different gender categories that have different preferences for play time and understand that teams will make different decisions about their roster composition. These are only suggestions.

### My team has always had 8 open players; what can I do?

We expect the hardest part for many teams with OCUA's move to Ratio O is deciding what to do with their roster now that there is less space for men and non-women players on the field, in terms of play time.

Each team will need to decide what works best for them, but we recommend teams who previously had 8 men on their team and want all those men to return to simply continue to roster the extra man this year and in future years, until attrition brings your roster size down to seven men.

This will mean on the occasions that your team's entire open roster shows up, men/non-women players will have to sit off for two points in a row every once in a while, but their overall play time will not be significantly diminished. Here's how the math works out for a game with the score of 14-12:

- Under OCUA's previous 4:3 gender ratio, assuming a team has two full lines of men and plays a game with 26 points, every man gets to play 13 points.
- Under Ratio O, assuming a team has 8 players who play only in the open category (typically men), every open player would play either 11 or 12 points.

The net difference in play time for players who play only in the open category is one or two points in a relatively high-scoring, close game. Often, we see teams lose one or two points of play time simply because players do not show up to their games on time.

My team has historically struggled to recruit women and now we are going to need more; what do I do?

OCUA knows that, for some teams, finding more women is going to be another one of the growing pains for Ratio O. The good news is that for teams who like two full lines of women, they only need to fill one more woman-designated roster spot.

We are optimistic that the fact women will now have equal representation on the field will be an incentive for more women to get involved in Ultimate, or to play more Ultimate than they are currently playing. While this first season might be a bit challenging, we are confident that if women have a better experience with Ratio O, we will increase our membership of women and/or get our women members playing more. But that can only happen if we bite the bullet for a first season to up the representation of women in play time – we've decided that season is summer 2020.

Can OCUA support Ratio O with its current membership population?

We are confident we can grow our women members to support Ratio O. This summer, OCUA and its captains will need to fill approximately 160 more women-designated roster spots. Considering the size of our membership, and our growing demographics of young adult women (women represent approximately half our adult members under the age of 30!), we think we are up to the challenge.



## Getting to This Decision

### How did OCUA come the decision to use Ratio O?

We know the decision to implement Ratio O was a big decision for OCUA and its members, and took it very seriously. OCUA has taken steps to move towards greater gender equity in terms of representation on the field over the past few years as building blocks towards Summer 2020:

- **2016 Summer** – OCUA introduces introductory social leagues, which are primarily targeted at younger athletes who are newer to the sport, that all use a gender ratio of 3:2
- **2018 Summer** – OCUA introduces the Monday 3:3 social league for summer league in addition to our 4:3 leagues – we believe this is a huge driver of our success in achieving balanced gender demographics amongst our young adult members (women represent approximately half our adult members under the age of 30)
- **2018 Winter** – OCUA launches its first-ever gender equity indoor league, running our flagship Parity League as 3:3
- **2019 Summer** – OCUA implements a requirement for teams to have both a man and woman captain to help create space for women as on-field leaders
- **2019 Summer** – OCUA implements Ratio A at MGM and No Borders tournaments, which provided women with equal on-field representation for the first time ever at OCUA-hosted tournaments.
- **2019 Fall** – OCUA pilots two different gender ratios that increase women’s on-field representation – [Ratio A and Ratio B](#).

Based on our experiences with these initiatives, as well as feedback we collected from our pilot leagues and consultation with leaders and dedicated members across OCUA, our staff and Board of Directors participated in a retreat in December to determine our [organization’s vision for gender](#) and set a path to achieve that vision.

It was at that retreat that we decided to implement Ratio O across all 7v7 leagues this summer. We believe this is a smart move for OCUA strategically, but most important we believe it is the right thing to do based on our values and our commitment to recreational mixed Ultimate.

### What else is OCUA doing to support gender equity?

We understand that simply creating more space for women in terms of play time and representation on the field won’t solve all the challenges women athletes face in co-ed sports and within OCUA. However, we think it is an important step and one of many OCUA is taking to improve the experience of our women members. Some of our bigger initiatives to support a positive experience for women playing in our leagues include:

- The introduction of social leagues that use a 3:3 gender ratio.
- Ensuring every team has a captain of each gender.
- Implementing the WFDF foul rule to encourage safer on-field play.
- Developing a [robust policy suite](#) that includes policies on harassment and sexual harassment, gender identity, and gender equity.

- Supporting a variety of women's initiatives, such as our [indoor women's competitive development program](#) and the [Domes and Drinks](#) series for masters aged women.
- A plan to develop more pre-summer clinics for new players, particularly women.
- OCUA is investing in a large marketing plan for 2020 to help recruit new players to the sport, specifically targeting women.

We know gender dynamics are complicated and gender equity is a multi-pronged issue. We don't pretend that we are solving all the problems related to gender equity and a woman's experience playing sport. We also know that by developing a [vision for gender equity](#) that focuses on women in gender equity, we are perpetuating the use of the gender binary. We will be considering how we can best balance developing our service offering for women while also including trans and non-binary people as we go forward.

This is a new area for OCUA and many of our partners in the mixed sports space. We are sure we will continue to learn, grow and adapt in this space in time.

### [Are other organizations using this type of gender ratio?](#)

Based on our research as well as a discussion we facilitated with Canada's other five large Ultimate leagues (representing Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec City), we are the first major Ultimate league to mandate a gender ratio or minimum gender requirement that supports equal play time for men and women.

However, models that provide equal representation in terms of play time for women and men have been implemented successfully over the past few years by our partners that govern provincial, national and international Ultimate play.

For example, the 4 on 4 indoor ultimate series run in Quebec and Ontario, which feature both competitive and recreational 4v4 tournaments, moved entirely to a 2:2 (M:F) gender ratio from either 3:1 or 3:1/2:2 (Offence Choice) over the past 3 years. Both provinces have seen huge growth of their series with the new gender ratio.

Additionally, all 7v7 mixed Ultimate tournaments sanctioned by Ontario Ultimate, Ultimate Canada, USA Ultimate (USAU) and World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF) all follow [Ratio A](#), which provides equal play time for men and women players.

### [Why not just use an existing gender ratio, like WFDF's Ratio A or B?](#)

We piloted both [Ratio A and Ratio B](#), which are different gender ratios that have been supported by World Flying Disc Federation (WFDF), in the Fall of 2019 but neither seemed to fit our membership's needs.

Ratio A mandates that teams alternate a ratio of 3:4 and 4:3 (M:F) every two points after the first point. Our members found this ratio was a little too complicated and hard to keep track of for league play. The feedback was that it is likely better suited for competitive teams that often have a coach or captain tracking play time and calling lines.

Ratio B designates one end zone and the team that is lined up on that end zone to start a point gets to select which gender ratio will be used for that point – 3:4 or 4:3 (M:F). Teams played in our pilot of Ratio

B found it difficult to bring an appropriate roster because they could not predict which gender ratio another team would elect to play. Teams who used a 3:4 (M:F) gender ratio more often were penalized in terms of Spirit or pressured by the other team not to select that ratio on points where it was their turn to choose if the other team did not have many women.

We felt Ratio O combined the best of both gender ratios while avoiding some of the pitfalls – it makes play time for each gender consistent and predictable while being easy to track and manage on the field.