

## HOWMAN: QUALITY OUT-OF-COMPETITION TESTING IS CRUCIAL

By AIU Chair - David Howman

**3 AUGUST 2023, MONACO:** The Athletics Integrity Unit's (AIU) publication today of extensive out-of-competition (OOC) testing data, accumulated ahead of last year's World Athletics Championships in the USA, represents a landmark step in transparency and our commitment to 'Shining A Light' on global anti-doping efforts, showing how this work impacts major athletics events, especially the Olympic Games and World Athletics Championships.

Transparency is one of our key factors in measuring integrity in our sport. We pledge to publish these statistics on an ongoing basis, after major championships, so stakeholders can understand how participating teams are tested and so we can dispel some of the speculations and wrong perceptions about the levels of domestic testing in athletics. This data shows the depth of national testing programmes for elite athletes, through the levels of testing of national teams which competed at the 2022 World Athletics Championships in Eugene, Oregon. We are now in the pre-Budapest testing phase, and after those championships we will share similar statistics publicly.



Under its Registered Testing Pool (RTP), the AIU is responsible for testing elite international-level athletes, mainly those in the Top 10 of their discipline - both men and women - who are likely to enjoy success at major international events. This focus is directly related to the mission of the AIU's testing programme in elite athletics (especially the Olympics and the World Championships, followed by the Diamond League): to protect the integrity of the sport, specifically the finals and podium places.

Approximately 500 elite track-and-field athletes are selected each year on AIU's RTP. Given the predictability of in-competition testing, the AIU's emphasis is on OOC testing for RTP athletes and, wherever they reside or train, these competitors are tested regularly OOC by the AIU. No-notice testing is a critical component in mitigating doping by catching sophisticated cheaters and deterring would-be cheaters. Otherwise, doping can be done prior to competition, be undetectable during the event, but still have a significant impact on an athlete's performance.

It is generally only possible to do OOC testing on athletes who are in a RTP and who provide Whereabouts information.

To complement its high-level testing programme - and to bolster its objective of keeping elite podiums and finals clean - the AIU cooperates closely with National Anti-Doping Agencies (NADOs), urging them to focus domestic RTPs on the next tier of athletes; the ones most likely to spring surprises at major championships. This way the pinnacle of the competition is well protected from athletes who emerge quickly through the rankings or produce surprise performances, or where the depth of talent means results are unpredictable.

The data published today shows the results of this collaborative approach purely from a statistical perspective and highlights some of the strengths and weaknesses in our OOC testing. An event like the World Championships is huge, with almost 2,000 competitors, many of whom would not have been in any testing pool and therefore not subject to OOC testing. Consequently, a third of the 1,719 athletes in Eugene had zero OOC tests in the ten months prior to the event. However, this number drops dramatically to just six per cent for the top-eight finishers (the finalists) in individual events. Another key finding was that only 39% of the athletes had three or more OOC tests, but this number rises to 81% for the top-eight finishers. In fact, top-eight athletes averaged 4.8 OOC tests in the lead-up to the World Championships.

These statistics indicate a system that is generally working towards its goals, with the AIU and NADOs, for the most part, successfully concentrating OOC testing where it matters most - on elite athletes. This is complemented by in-competition testing. NADOs can use in-competition testing to target athletes who are not subject to OOC testing. Only 16% of athletes in Eugene had no testing at all leading into the event and this number shrinks to just one per cent for the top-eight finishers.

Now we have shown our hand and will be held to account. We welcome the challenge of answering the question **‘What next - how can we improve drug testing in athletics and related efforts to thwart cheats?’**

Hovering over this question is the obvious reality that anti-doping resources, financial and otherwise, are finite and therefore must be maximised and used in as targeted a manner as possible. Let us be clear - more is not necessarily better and therefore the crux of this matter is more so how we tackle this scourge rather than how much we have to tackle it.

In this vein, and noting budgetary constraints, the AIU's focus is on doing better, not more. Although 81% (of top-eight finishers in individual events have at least three OOC tests) is good, we and the NADOs can be better at predicting likely finalists and ensuring they are included in a testing pool, either the AIU's RTP or their NADO's RTP ahead of major events. Our strategies are crucial to our success and we are consistently working on improving the numbers.

This links to my next point - quality, quality, quality!

Numbers are meaningless without consideration of the quality of our testing. The AIU has a sophisticated approach to testing that is capable of catching real cheats who are operating at the summit of the sport. Few other sports do likewise internationally. At the national level, we would like NADOs to adopt similar methods to the AIU to ensure more quality testing of second-tier athletes who would be on national RTPs. The AIU will strive for even closer ties with NADOs to help them in this regard, thereby further protecting the pinnacle of athletics.

Related to this, the team-by-team analysis reveals the inconsistent efforts across NADOs. Some have done a great job but others have very disappointing numbers when it comes to OOC testing. There needs to be a marked improvement from certain countries. Under World Athletics rules National Federations have an obligation to ensure an appropriate level of testing of their athletes. If this is not being delivered the AIU can and will take action.

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**Testing data - 39 Member Federations:**

<https://www.athleticsintegrity.org/national-teams-testing>.

**Out-of-Competition Testing Statistics - Pre-World Athletics Championships 2022:** <https://bit.ly/Pre-WAC-2022-OOC-Testing-Statistics>

**EXPLANATORY NOTE:**

As part of its responsibilities, the AIU continuously monitors testing at national level, both for (i) ensuring good coordination and no redundancy with its own testing programme and (ii) for monitoring compliance with the testing requirements set out under World Athletics Rule 15.

Under the framework of Rule 15, governing National Federation Anti-Doping Obligations, which came into force in January 2019, National Federations are accountable for ensuring appropriate anti-doping measures are in place in their respective jurisdictions. Among other things, the Rule sets out minimum requirements for testing of the ‘Category A’ National Federations which are deemed to have the highest doping risk and are considered a threat to the overall integrity of the sport.

The key requirement in Rule 15 is that an athlete from a ‘Category A’ country must undergo at least three no-notice, out-of-competition tests (urine and blood), conducted no less than 3 weeks apart in the 10 months leading up to a major event. Only then do such athletes become eligible to represent their national team at the World Athletics Championships or the Olympic Games.

## About the Athletics Integrity Unit

The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) is the independent body created by the World Athletics that manages all integrity issues - both doping and non-doping - for the sport of athletics. The remit of the AIU includes anti-doping, the pursuit of individuals engaged in age or competition results manipulation, investigating fraudulent behaviour with regards to transfers of allegiance, and detecting other misconduct including bribery and breaches of betting rules. It is the AIU’s role to drive cheats out of our sport, and to do everything within its power to support honest athletes around the world who dedicate their lives to reaching their sporting goals through dedication and hard work.

### Athletics Integrity Unit

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