

Para-Swimming

Para-Swimming is swimming for people with impairments resulting from a health condition (disability).

Para-Athletes can have a physical, visual or intellectual impairment and compete in a variety of classification classes, depending on their functional ability to perform each stroke.

Para-Swimming competitions include freestyle, backstroke, butterfly, breaststroke and medley events.

Classification

In Para-Sport classification provides the structure for fair and equitable competition to ensure that winning is determined by skill, fitness, power, endurance, tactical ability and mental focus – the same factors that account for success in sport for able-bodied athletes.

The Para-Sport classification assessment process identifies the eligibility of each Para-Athlete's impairment, and groups them into a sport class according to the degree of activity limitation resulting from their impairment.

Classification is sport-specific as an eligible impairment affects a Para-Athlete's ability to perform in different sports to a different extent. Each Para-Sport has a different classification system.

More information on classification and sport classes is available under 'Classification detail' below.

Qualification – the road to Rio

Qualification for Para-Swimming events at Rio is based around results at the 2015 IPC (International Paralympic Committee) Swimming World Championships held in Glasgow in July, and at other key events in the lead up to Rio 2016. The top two ranked Para-Athletes at the championships in each of the individual medal events on the Rio 2016 Paralympic Programme each obtain one qualification slot for their respective country.

Athletes who did not place first or second at the World Championships, but who have achieved a minimum qualifying standard (MQS) at an IPC recognised competition between 15 October 2014 and 31 January 2016, are considered for the remaining slots by the IPC based on their weighted ranking.



As at November 2015, New Zealand had qualified five Para-Swimming slots for the Rio 2016 Paralympics.

The total number of qualifying spots for New Zealand is expected to be announced in mid-February, with the New Zealand team selection announcement in April 2016.

"The IPC Swimming World Championships was an outstanding meet for the New Zealand Para-Swimming team. The event was our most important qualifying event leading into next year's Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. We set ourselves the ambitious target of securing five slots and we achieved this due to the enormous efforts of all Para-Swimmers and support team. With just over one year to go until Rio 2016 we are in a great position and we will move forward with plenty of momentum."

Jon Shaw, Paralympics New Zealand Head Performance Coach – Para-Swimming

Rio 2016 Para-Swimming

As with the Olympic swimming events, the Para-Swimming events cover the four different strokes, the medley and relays, but with a range of functional classes for each event (an outline of the classes is provided under 'Classification detail' below):

- Freestyle – 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m
- Backstroke – 50m, 100m
- Breaststroke – 50m, 100m
- Butterfly – 50m, 100m
- Medley – 150m, 200m
- Relay – 4x50m, 4x100m (freestyle and medley).

Medal events: 149 in total, comprised of 82 men's events, 66 women's events and one mixed event.

Where: Olympic Aquatics Stadium, Barra Olympic Park.

When: Thursday 8 September to Saturday 17 September 2016.

More info: www.rio2016.com/en/paralympics/swimming

"We are targeting a total of 9 medals at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games. Ten months out from the Games we feel our systems and structures are well tested and we are on track to meet our targets. The Para-Swimming squad is headlined by our London 2012 Paralympic medallists Sophie Pascoe, Mary Fisher and Cameron Leslie, and World Champion Nikita Howarth. We also have Paralympian Rebecca Dubber and emerging Para-Swimmer Jesse Reynolds who produced outstanding performances at the recent IPC Swimming World Championships."

Jon Shaw, Paralympics New Zealand Head Performance Coach – Para-Swimming

Paralympics medals won 2000 to 2012

24 gold, 18 silver, 14 bronze

GOLD

- Men's 400m Freestyle S7 (Sydney 2000) – Dean Booth
- Men's 150m Individual Medley SM4 (Beijing 2008) – Cameron Leslie
- Women's 100m Backstroke S10 (Beijing 2008) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 100m Breaststroke SB9 (Beijing 2008) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 200m Individual Medley SM10 (Beijing 2008) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 200m Individual Medley SM11 (London 2012) – Mary Fisher
- Men's 150m Individual Medley SM4 (London 2012) – Cameron Leslie
- Women's 100m Butterfly S10 (London 2012) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 100m Freestyle S10 (London 2012) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 200m Individual Medley SM10 (London 2012) – Sophie Pascoe

SILVER

- Women's 200m Medley SM8 (Sydney 2000) – Gillian Pollock
- Men's 100m Backstroke S9 (Sydney 2000) – Sean Tretheway
- Women's 100m Butterfly S10 (Beijing 2008) – Sophie Pascoe
- Men's 100m Breaststroke SB13 (Beijing 2008) – Daniel Sharp
- Women's 100m Backstroke S11 (London 2012) – Mary Fisher
- Women's 100m Freestyle S11 (London 2012) – Mary Fisher
- Women's 100m Backstroke S10 (London 2012) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 100m Breaststroke SB9 (London 2012) – Sophie Pascoe
- Women's 50m Freestyle S10 (London 2012) – Sophie Pascoe
- Men's 100m Breaststroke SB13 (London 2012) – Daniel Sharp

BRONZE

- Men's 100m Freestyle S7 (Sydney, 2000) – Dean Booth



The Stars of Para-Swimming

Kiwi **Sophie Pascoe** has continued her winning form recently with three gold, one silver and two bronze medals at the 2015 IPC Swimming World Championships in July, following on from her success at London 2012 Paralympics with three gold and three silver medals. Sophie's key events at the Rio 2016 will be the Women's 200 Individual Medley SM10 and 100m Butterfly S10.

Mary Fisher is another winning kiwi on the international stage, with success at the London 2012 Paralympics (one gold, two silver and one bronze) backed up by three gold and two silver medals at the 2015 IPC Swimming World Championships. Mary will be looking to defend her 200m Individual Medley title at Rio 2016 and potentially add other titles to her collection.

Recent international stars include:

- Daniel Dias, the most successful Brazilian Paralympian who this year won seven gold medals at the IPC Swimming World Championships.
- Jacqueline Freney who was London 2012's most decorated Paralympian winning gold in all eight events she competed in.
- Jessica Long – a 17-time Paralympic medallist and the youngest ever Paralympian from the USA when she competed at the Athens 2004 Paralympics at the age of 12 years.
- Qing Xu – China's S6 swimming star who shined at the London 2012 Paralympic Games, winning four gold medals and wowing the crowds.

Did you know?

- Para-Swimmers who are blind are required to have an assistant or 'tapper' to help them as they approach the swimming pool end wall, either to make a turn or for the finish of the race.
- Para-Swimmers cannot use anything that may aid their speed, buoyancy or endurance. No prostheses or assistive devices are permitted in the pool.
- Trischa Zorn from the USA is the sport's most decorated Paralympian having won 32 gold, nine silver and five bronze medals between 1980 and 2004.
- At the London 2012 Paralympics, 604 swimmers from 74 countries competed in 148 medal events.
- Nikita Howarth, a New Zealand World Champion Para-Swimmer, was the youngest ever New Zealand Paralympian when she attended the London 2012 Paralympic Games at the age of 13.
- World Championships are held every two years, with the latest being the 2015 IPC Swimming World Championships held in Glasgow.
- At the first Paralympics in 1960, only Para-Athletes with spinal cord injuries competed in Para-Swimming.

Terminology

Paralympian A Para-Athlete who has taken part in Paralympic Games.

Para-Athlete All athletes within the Paralympic movement from grass roots to elite level.

Tapper Assistant who uses a pole with a cushioned end to warn visually-impaired swimmers of an imminent turn or the end of the race.

Anchor The last member of a relay team to swim.

Timeline

- 1960** Swimming was introduced as one of the eight sports held at the first international Paralympic Games in Rome. A maximum of three Para-Athletes competed in each event and competition was limited to athletes with spinal cord injuries.
- 1980** Para-Athletes with cerebral palsy compete for the first time at the Arnhem Paralympics in the Netherlands.
- 1988** The Seoul Paralympics Games take place in the same city as the Olympics for the first time since 1960.
- 2008** New Zealand's Sophie Pascoe, at age 15, competes at the Beijing 2008 Paralympics and comes home with three gold medals, a world record and one silver medal.
- 2012** At the London 2012 Games, Sophie Pascoe wins three golds in the SM10 200m, S10 100m Butterfly and 100m Freestyle, and Mary Fisher wins four medals including gold in the SM11 200m Individual Medley
- 2016** The Rio 2016 Paralympics will host around 4,350 athletes from more than 160 countries to compete in 526 medal events in 22 different sports.

Classification detail

Para-Swimming caters for three impairment groups – physical, visual and intellectual.

Sport Classes

The sport class names in swimming consist of a prefix S, SM or SB and a number. The prefixes stand for the event and the number indicates the sport class the athlete competes in during the respective event.

The prefixes stand for:

- S: Freestyle, Butterfly and Backstroke events
- SM: Individual Medley
- SB: Breaststroke.

Sport classes 1-10: Physical impairment

There are 10 different sport classes for athletes with physical impairment, numbered 1-10. A lower number indicates a more severe activity limitation than a higher number. Note that athletes with different impairments compete against each other, but the impact of their impairment on swim performance is similar.

Sport classes 11-13: Visual impairment

Swimmers with visual impairment compete in sport classes 11-13, with 11 meaning a complete or nearly complete loss of sight and 13 describing the minimum eligible visual impairment. Athletes in sport class 11 compete with blackened goggles.

Sport class 14: Intellectual impairment

Swimmers with intellectual impairment who also meet the sport-specific criteria compete in sport class 14.

For further details please go to www.paralympics.org.nz or to www.hpsnz.org.nz