MILANO CORTINA 2026 OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

PRE-GAMES REPORT

JUNE 2026

INTRODUCTION

The International Testing Agency (ITA) is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing clean sport by managing anti-doping programs for International Federations and major sporting events, including the Olympic Games. In line with its mandate from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the ITA managed the delivery of a comprehensive anti-doping program for the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games, ensuring an unbiased and expert-led approach to protect the integrity of the Games.

The Milano Cortina 2026 Pre-Games Anti-Doping Program represents a critical phase in the ITA's overarching strategy to ensure clean sport at the Olympics. Conducted in close collaboration with all Winter Olympic International Federations (IFs) and National/Regional Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs/RADOs), this program focused on the global testing of athletes before the Games, particularly those competing in high-risk sports. By identifying and addressing potential testing gaps, the program aimed to create a level playing field through a strategic testing approach for all competitors well before they arrived in Paris.

This report and the associated dashboard outline the strategic efforts and outcomes of the pre-Games anti-doping program, detailing how the ITA coordinated global testing recommendations and risk assessments in the months leading up to the Games. It highlights the extent of testing conducted, the collaborative efforts of anti-doping organisations worldwide, and the ITA's commitment to further enhance the Olympic anti-doping program during the crucial pre-Games phase.

Introduced in 2016 following a recommendation from the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) Independent Observers program, pre-Games initiatives have been implemented for all editions of the Olympic Games since. In the context of the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026, the IOC delegated to the ITA the implementation of the anti-doping program and activities related to the Games, including a pre-Games

program. After Tokyo 2020, Beijing 2022 and Paris 2024, this is the fourth pre-Games initiative led by the ITA on behalf of the IOC, which stems from experience gained in the previous projects.

The aim of the ITA Pre-Games program was to ensure that potential participants are monitored and subject to robust and proportionate testing in the lead up to the Olympic Winter Games. While it is the responsibility of both the respective International Federations (IFs) (or the ITA on their behalf) and National/Regional Anti-Doping Organisations (NADOs/RADOs) to implement risk-based doping control activities on potential participants, the ITA aims at closing any identified gaps and offering additional perspectives and insights through the monitoring of testing activities before the Games. To that purpose, the ITA developed a data analysis framework to produce testing recommendations which had to be implemented in the six months period before the Games.

KEY MESSAGES

- Testing recommendations were issued to anti-doping organisations (ADOs), in this case the respective NADOs/RADOs and IFs, based on a retrospective analysis of the Beijing 2022 pre-Games period, performance at the Games (incl. medals and final rankings) as well as disciplines and NOCs distributions according to their physiological risk and the size of their delegation respectively.
- A significant increase of testing before the Games has been highlighted, with 92% of athletes tested at least once in the six months before the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games.
- Outcomes of pre-Games initiatives should be leveraged well in advance of the pre-Games period of the following Olympic Games, especially when major gaps were identified in the testing program of participants from specific National Olympic Committees (NOCs) or disciplines.

PRODUCING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The first phase of the project consisted of a thorough data analysis based on three main components:

a) **A retrospective analysis** of the Beijing 2022 participants' level of testing during the 12 months before the event. This testing history was assessed through reports exported from the Anti-Doping Administration and Management System (ADAMS). Performance at the Games, including medal achievements, was also considered using the final ranking of each athlete.

b) **A classification of all disciplines** on the program of the Olympic Winter Games in four categories (Extended, Intermediate High, Intermediate Low, Limited) based on their physiological risks. The classification aims at balancing testing efforts on disciplines considered to be at a higher risk of doping. The reasoning behind this classification is based on previous pre-Games initiatives and is supported by published research projects conducted by the ITA[1]. A minimum number of tests was then associated to each discipline according to its level of risk and type (i.e., individual or team). The resulting risk-based classification and the associated number of tests were shared[2] with all anti-doping organisations (ADOs).

c) **A categorisation of all National Olympic Committees (NOCs)** participating in the Games based on the size of their delegations and other parameters such as past Olympic results, historical risks of doping or the compliance status of the corresponding NADO.

Based on the above data analysis framework, a first round of testing recommendations was sent to all ADOs, with specific targeted comments on aspects to improve for more than 40 ADOs (e.g., implement a better distribution of tests in time to reduce their predictability, avoid limiting testing to training camps or over the two months period before the Games, increase in-competition testing while maintaining the level of out-of-competition testing). All other participating ADOs also received general testing instructions and guidelines.

The project, its resulting recommendations as well as the guidelines for their implementation were presented at the iNADO webinar "Milano Cortina 2026: Anti-Doping Preparations for the Games – Key Updates for NADOs" which included two sessions in July 2025.

The monitoring phase started with the reception of the provisional list of participants. Although the list was very broad (10'000 athletes as of December), the detected trends were relevant to monitor the implementation of the first round of recommendations. The list of potential participants remained quite broad until 26 January 2026, when all sports entries were progressively finalised, and the delegation registration meetings (DRMs) took place.

[1] Hayward *et al.* (2022), The athletic characteristics of Olympic sports to assist anti-doping strategies. *Drug Testing and Analysis* 14(9), 1599-1613.
[2] This document is available on the ITA website: Pre-Games Testing Instructions and Guidelines Milano Cortina 2026

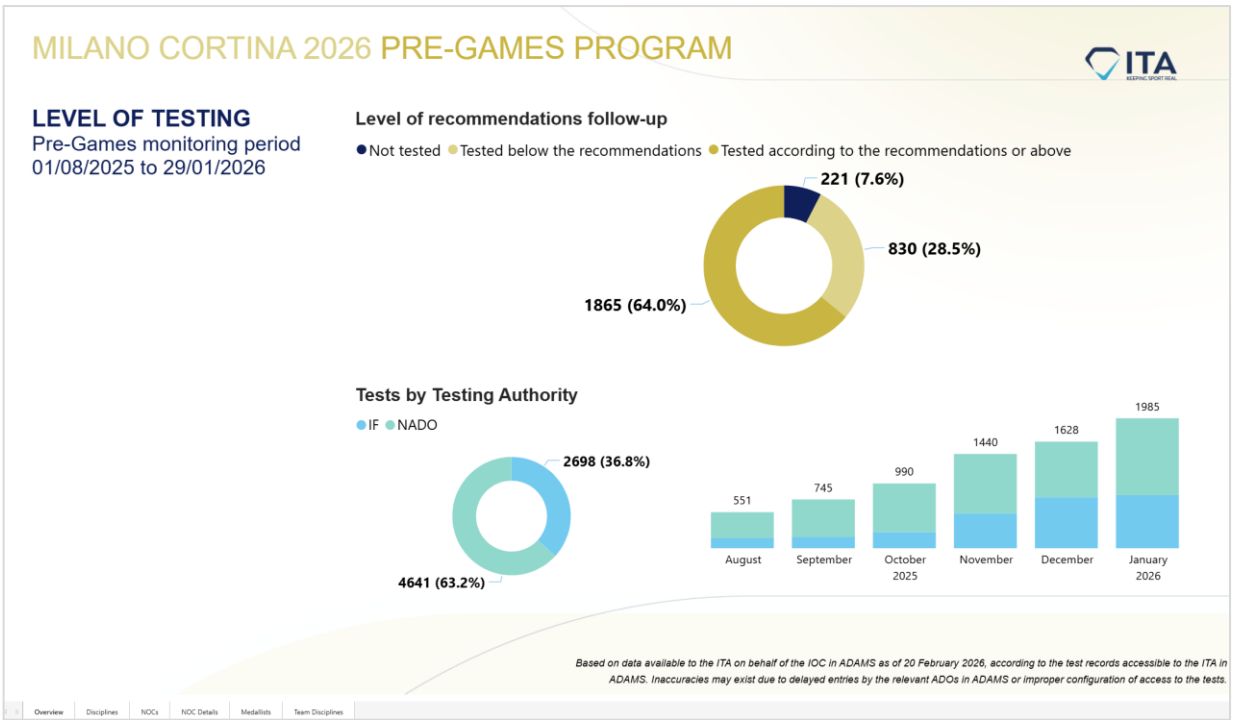
MAIN RESULTS

As part of efforts to promote transparency and leverage modern technologies to communicate about information, the results of the pre-Games monitoring phase are available in the format of an interactive dashboard published on the ITA website.

This dashboard includes global statistics, as well as the level of testing in the 6 months before the Opening of the Olympic Village (from 1 August 2025 to 29 January 2026).

Several breakdowns are available and can be navigated through the different pages of the dashboard:

- ✓ Level of testing discipline (including risk level)
- ✓ Level of testing by NOC (including a distribution by continent and delegation size)
- ✓ Overview for medallists in individual disciplines
- ✓ Details for all teams involved in team disciplines



Conclusions

Global testing before Milano Cortina 2026

a) **High proportion of athletes tested before the Games.** More than 90% of all participants were tested at least once during the pre-Games period. This represents a significant improvement compared to the 2022 pre-Games period, for which the number of not tested athletes was 14 to 15%. A lack of testing has been noted on 46 participants from 24 NOCs, a significant improvement compared to the Beijing 2022 pre-Games period (33 NOCs with athletes not tested). Despite these findings, global figures, together with the distribution of tests between testing authorities, highlight an improvement in collaboration between ADOs. Additionally, in individual disciplines, 17 medallists were not tested according to the pre-Games recommendations, and one of them was not tested at all in the 6 months before the event.

b) **Gaps remaining in testing programs.** While recommendations were well followed in terms of number of tests, several areas of improvements have been identified, such as the variability in the type of collected samples, the distribution of tests in time, their predictability or their announced nature when bulk testing is performed at training camps and the importance of out-of-competition testing for an effective testing program. Improvements in testing plans are still needed, as illustrated by the 221 (8%) participating athletes not tested at all and the 830 (29%) of them not tested according to the recommendations.

   At the continental level, gaps were observed in the testing of the 27 athletes coming from Africa and Oceania. These gaps might be seen as important when expressed as a percentage, although it must be noted that two thirds of all participants were coming from European NOCs. Similarly, a low level of testing was noted for NOCs with small delegations (less than 10 athletes) with a significant proportion of athletes not tested.

c) **Team disciplines testing.** Testing recommendations were phrased as an average number of tests per athlete across a team. In curling, recommendations were met for all teams but three, including one medallist team. In ice hockey, only seven teams were tested according to the recommendations. Notably, three medallists' teams were tested below the recommendations. Ice hockey players from North American professional leagues (NHL, AHL) were tested similarly to athletes not belonging to this group in 6 months before the Games.

   Nevertheless, the professional leagues group was only tested after 15 October 2025. There is currently no information about potential testing happening outside of the World Anti-Doping Code framework. Should any anti-doping activity happen in line with International Standards, before this date, it should be made available in ADAMS to the relevant anti-doping organisations (i.e., IF, corresponding NADOs, Major Event Organisations) responsible for these athletes

at least one year before the Olympic Winter Games so that it can be reviewed and included in the athlete's testing history.

Technical considerations

a) **Accessibility to data.** The merits of ADAMS must be acknowledged as it is a worldwide database constantly fed and solicited by numerous stakeholders. Despite a few improvements due to recent upgrades, the current reporting system featured in ADAMS is not adapted to the timely delivery of a monitoring process and the implementation of agile and efficient testing programs in the lead up to a major event in which thousands of athletes and delegations take part. Frequent updates are needed during the pre-Games period (e.g., to study the athletes' testing history), as the provisional list of participants evolves daily. Updating ADAMS records accordingly is a time-consuming and inefficient process sitting well below current data engineering standards. Acknowledging the heavy challenge that WADA faces to maintain such a complex and multi-stakeholder database, efforts should focus on implementing solutions that allow for data exchanges through APIs – or at the minimum more relevant reporting systems – to guarantee the efficient exchange of anti-doping data among all stakeholders.

b) **Accuracy of ADAMS data.** Given the volume of testing before a major event such as the Olympic Winter Games, it is crucial that doping control forms (DCFs) are entered in ADAMS immediately after the test. Efforts should be deployed to significantly reduce the time lapse between the test and the entry of the DCF in ADAMS, in anticipation of the requirements set out in the forthcoming 2027 International Standard for Testing (IST). Solutions leveraging the benefits of paperless systems and APIs must be explored and prioritised.

Governance issues

a) **Qualification schedule.** A common challenge for most ADOs is the uncertainty related to the provisional list of participants. This necessarily impacts testing activities, in particular before the delegation's registration meetings (DRMs), which typically happen in the last week before the Games. This also creates issues for the monitoring of testing activities in the lead-up to the Games, especially given the technical difficulties mentioned above. The early detection of participants to the Games remains key for anti-doping organisations worldwide. Therefore, implementing measures allowing for early qualification is encouraged as this will strengthen the ability to organise and monitor testing activities as well as promote the integrity of the Games.

b) **Timeframe.** For most pre-Games projects, recommendations are usually shared a few months (3-8 months) before the event. While it makes sense for ADOs that already have established testing programs and for which recommendations are related to improvements, this does not seem to be relevant when major gaps are highlighted on potential participants (e.g., complete lack of testing). In such

situations, it is recommended that outcomes of previous pre-Games initiatives be used well in advance of the 6 months prior to the Games to establish and develop proper programs. Collaboration with WADA should be explored to leverage its NADO and RADO programs, as well as interactions with IFs. Similarly, should the country not have a NADO, the NOC acting as NADO should be contacted well before the pre-Games period to ensure it has the proper tools and expertise to conduct a well-articulated pre-Games program for its delegation, with the support of WADA and when need be the IOC, the ITA and the corresponding IFs. It is recommended to start such an initiative approximately 2 years before the Games.

c) **Accountability.** In the current situation, there are no eligibility rules mandating NOCs and IFs to ensure that a minimum level of testing be implemented for their respective athletes to compete at the Games. Consequently, the implementation of the pre-Games recommendations remains, by definition, not mandatory. As such, considerations should be made on ways to implement eligibility criteria or, at the very least, hold ADOs accountable for the timely implementation of the recommendations. In situations where a clear lack of testing is identified, WADA shall have the possibility to immediately address (i.e., within a meaningful timeline ahead of the Olympic Winter Games) the non-compliance associated with the lack of implementation of the recommendations.

The importance of continuously improving the quality, intelligence, and data-driven aspects of the Olympic anti-doping program cannot be overstated. Equally, it is noteworthy to highlight that the framework for testing, laboratory analysis and all other clean sport aspects is defined by the World Anti-Doping Code, the Prohibited List and the applicable WADA International Standards. These elements collectively aim at ensuring the integrity and compliance of the program within the framework and boundaries of a defined regulatory context.